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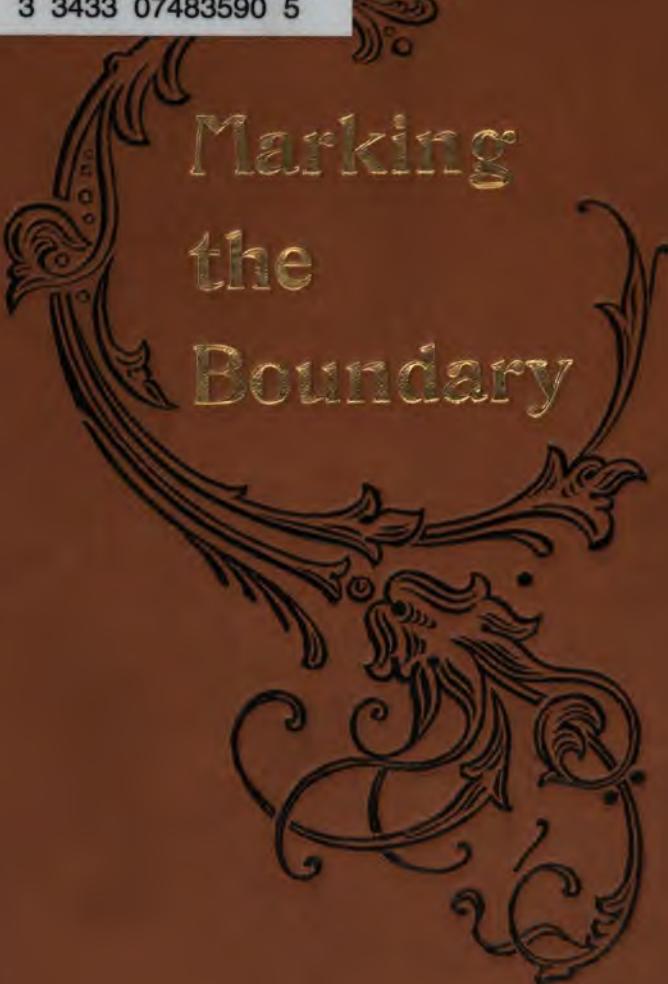
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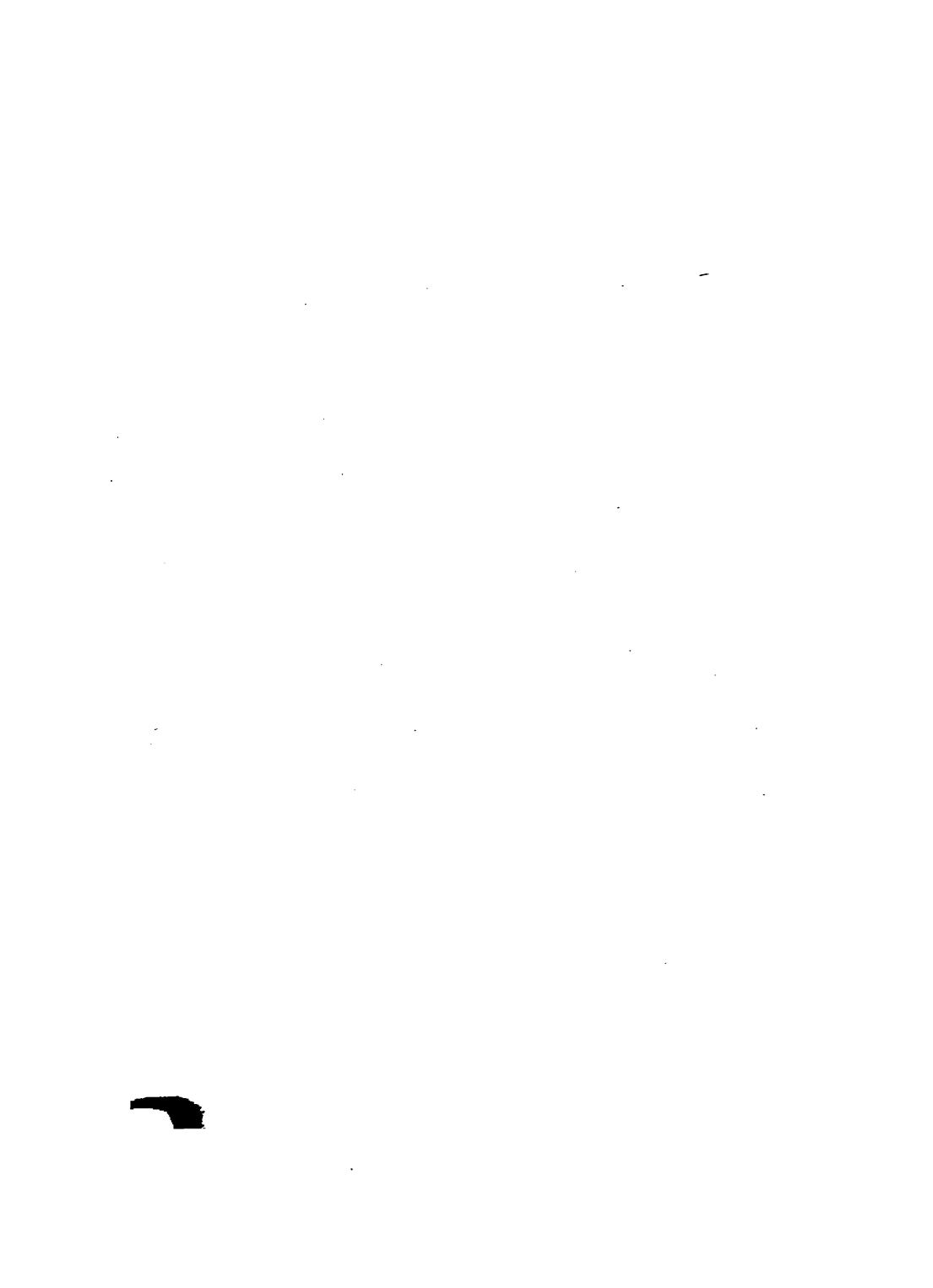
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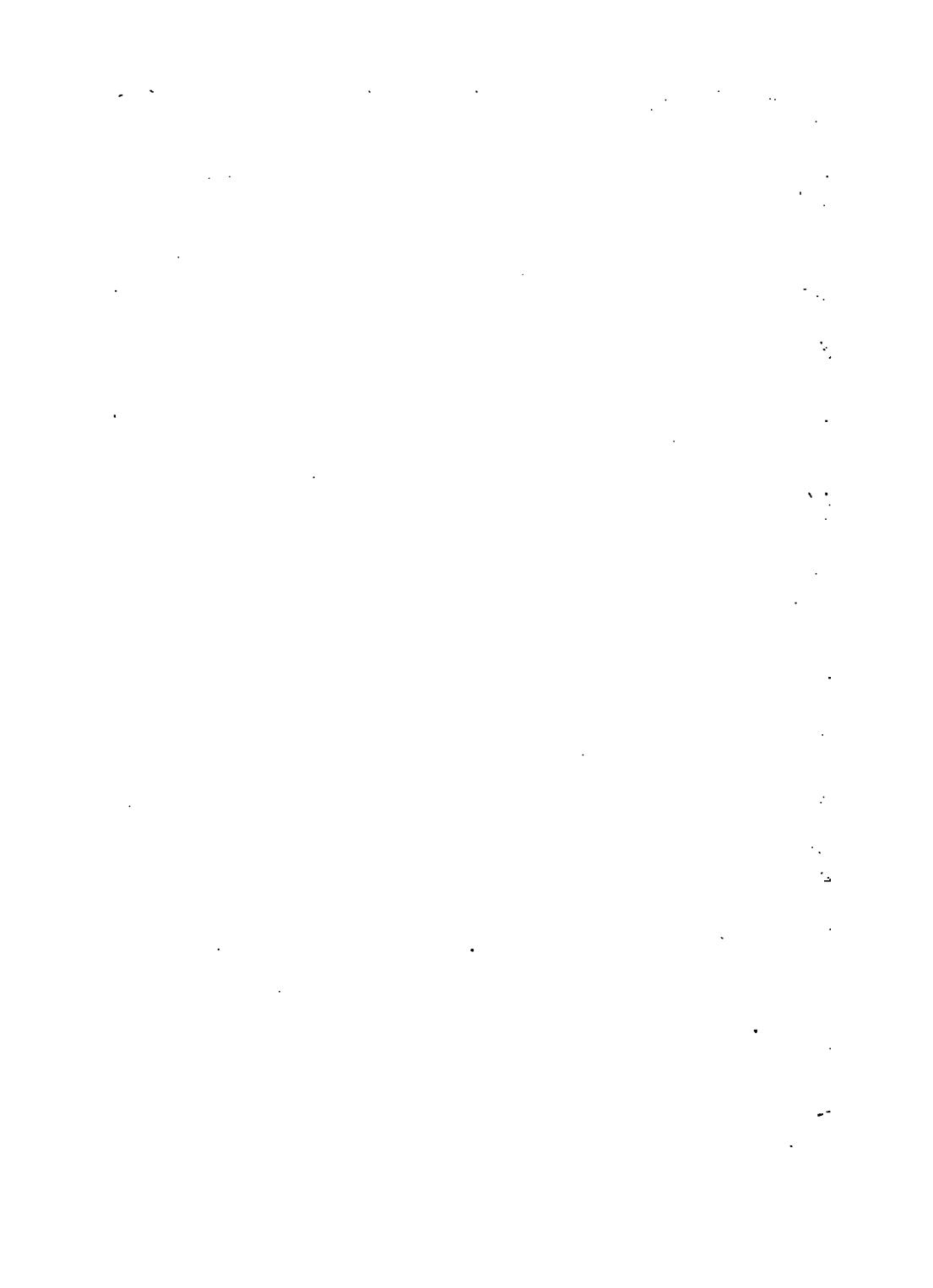
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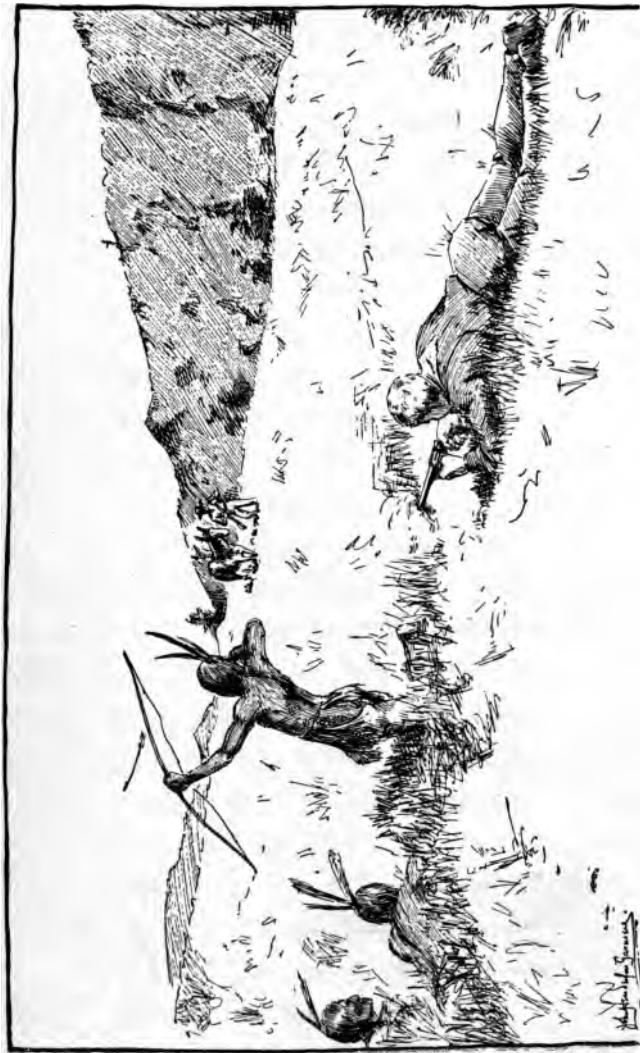




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Marking the Boundary

BY

EDWARD EVERETT BILLINGS

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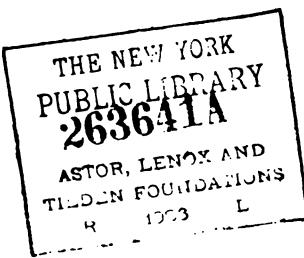
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MARKING THE BOUNDARY.

CHAPTER I.

“HELLO! Tom!”

“Well! is that you, Joe? I’m glad to run across you.”

“And I’m glad to meet you. I’ve wanted to see you ever since I heard that you were going out to the land of the buffaloes and Indians. Is it actually a fact, Tom?”

“Yes, it’s true enough; my father has promised that I may go,” said Tom, with a gleam of satisfaction flooding his face, which in a measure subsided as he noticed that his companion looked a little disappointed.

“I don’t envy you, but I do wish I were going with you,” said Joe.

“And don’t I just wish that you were! Why don’t you try for a place of some kind,

Joe?" said Tom, and the two lads stood discussing the all-absorbing topic of the day, which was the equipping and departure of the United States Northern Boundary Survey.

"Why, what chance would I have?" asked Joe, rather gloomily.

"You don't know until you've tried."

"But I've heard that the party was entirely made up."

"That will not make any difference," said Tom, as a sudden thought came into his head. Tom Troxwell was a son of Major Troxwell, who was chief in command of the expedition that was soon to start for the north to finish laying off the forty-ninth parallel, which is in part the boundary line between the United States and the British provinces. These two lads were about sixteen years of age, and had been schoolmates for several terms in St. Paul, Minnesota.

"And why will it not make any difference?" asked Joe.

"Because I can get you a letter from my father and perhaps it will get you into my party."

"I thought you were just going along with your father and not as a regular employe."

"Oh! no! there are no idlers allowed, and every one who goes on this expedition must be regularly employed," said Tom, rather ostentatiously.

"Well, what are you going to do? You don't know any more about surveying than I do, and neither of us went through more than eight books of geometry."

"I'm not expected to know anything about surveying. I'm the Second Assistant Bug Catcher; at least that's what Dr. Goon said I was to be. Oh! he's the jolliest old duffer I ever met, and I'm very glad I'm in his party."

"Bug Catcher? He said you were to be the Second Assistant Bug Catcher? He must have been making game of you," said

Joe, contracting his eyebrows in a puzzled way.

"That's just the berth I'm going to fill, all the same. You see, Dr. Goon is the naturalist from the Smithsonian Institute, and he has to have a lot of fellows catching insects, and hunting up bits of rocks and flowers and all such things. It's going to be a jolly lark. Come on over to father's office with me and I'll get you a letter to Dr. Goon, which I'm sure will get you in with us, if you want to go."

"Want to go! Why, I'd just give him my head for a football to go with you, and I'll try; if your father will be so kind as to give me a letter I'll do my best to deserve it," said Joe Conklin enthusiastically, as he followed his friend down Third street to Bridge Square. There, in rather a dilapidated old building, Major Troxwell had an office, for in those days (it was in the spring of 1874) St. Paul, Minnesota, was not the magnificent city it is now. Fortu-

nately Major Troxwell was in his office, and as the two boys entered he looked up from the paper he was reading, saying good-naturedly:

“Hello, Tom. I suppose you’ve come in to tell me that you don’t like the idea of going up there among the Indians now that Custer is stirring them up in the Black Hills.”

“Not much, sir. I’ll chance them if you’re going, and I’ve brought my chum with me. He wants to go along, too,” replied Tom, presenting his friend, who acknowledged the introduction in such a graceful way as quite to win the old major’s good opinion, and he thought that his son had done well in his choice of a friend.

“Well, boys, it seems to me that half the people in St. Paul want to go; all the young fellows do, and they certainly can’t all go,” said the major.

“Of course not; but, father, I do want to have Joe with me, and we thought, if you

would only give him a letter—just the right kind of a one, you know,—to Dr. Goon, it might get him into his party."

"Oh! What a diplomatic young man you are! And you'll be satisfied with that, will you? Well! I'll write you a note to the doctor, but I'm afraid his party is complete and it will do you no good." said the major, and, wheeling around in his chair and grasping a pen, he scratched off a few lines, which he folded and handed to Joe.

"Thank you, major, thank you," said Joe; "even should I be unsuccessful I shall remember your kindness."

"That's all right, my boy. I only hope it may be of service to you," replied the major, resuming his paper, and the boys withdrew to hunt up Dr. Goon. This gentleman was found in his room at his hotel, busily engaged at a table, writing. A gruff "Come in!" responded to Joe's rather timid knock.

"I believe this is Dr. Goon?" said Joe.

"Yes, sir, that's what I'm called," answered the doctor, carefully putting his pen behind his ear and leaning back in his chair. He was such a jolly looking little old man that Joe could hardly refrain from laughing at the sight of him.

He was very stout and bald, with but a fringe of hair, as white as snow, running around the back of his head, and smooth shaven save for a bushy trimming of white whiskers under his chin from ear to ear. A wig of heavy brown hair lay on his desk in front of him. His general appearance reminded Joe so much of a jack-in-the-box he once had when a little boy, that he nearly lost the use of his tongue, but he managed to reply:

"I have a letter of introduction for you from Major Troxwell."

"Humph! 'Introducing Mr. Joseph Conklin,'" said the doctor, reading the superscription. "How d'ye do, Mr. Conklin? This other young man I believe I've met before, the major's son, eh?"

"Yes, sir," replied Tom, and the doctor hurriedly glanced over the letter, and then eyed Joe from head to foot.

"Well, Mr. Conklin, you think you're especially fitted for this rough kind of work?"

"I was brought up on a farm and can do most any kind of work from handling an axe to—to—" and here Joe, hesitating for an appropriate word, was helped out by the doctor with—

"To skinning a butterfly, eh?"

"Yes, sir."

"And you suppose that you could skin and stuff butterflies, I don't doubt; now, don't you know, young man, that it takes years of practice to do that?"

"I can imagine it would, sir."

"Well, that's so, but we have lots to do besides sticking pins into butterflies. My party was entirely filled three days ago," said the doctor, and Joe's lower lip fell a trifle and his heart sank to the lowest depths, for he had hoped from the doctor's

manner that there was a possibility of his going upon this great journey of exploration.

"I'm awfully sorry to hear it. I did not know but you might need more assistance, and—"

"And you thought you were just the young man to give it? Well, sir, let me tell you, you are born under a lucky star; circumstances are propitious to your very first ambitions. You desire to assist natural history in its endeavors to enlighten this world of ignorance? It is worthy of any man. You have appeared on this scene at the most opportune time. My Third Assistant Bug Catcher has been exchanged to a position in the Mound Builder's party, and I'm not sorry; he was too big and clumsy for work of this kind. He was not a man of my choosing, no indeed! I could not help thinking of the state of my lepidoptera coming out from under his heavy hand whenever I looked at him, and my cryptogamia

would have looked like chop-feed fit for the mules after his handling."

"And has his place already been filled, sir?" asked Joe Conklin, almost quivering with anxiety, for the doctor had taken up a small book, written a line or two in it, and had then closed it.

"That man of whom I've just been speaking, will most likely take more solid comfort in pounding stakes into the ground than in any employment he would have found with me," said the doctor, not answering Joe's question, but glancing at him from the corner of his eye.

"Excuse me, sir, but is his place already filled?" repeated Joe.

"That man will most likely be congratulating himself the whole time upon getting out of just what you want to get into. Yes, the vacancy he created has been filled," said the doctor, and the boys, feeling that further conversation would be useless, were about to withdraw when the doctor with a merry twinkle in his eyes asked:

"Have you no desire to know who has filled that vacant berth?"



"YES, THE VACANCY HAS BEEN FILLED."

"I'm afraid it would not make much difference to our interests, sir," replied Joe, in a lugubrious voice.

"Now it might, you can't tell; you must never give up at the first rebuff in this world; you might find that some diffident young fellow had it, that could very easily be persuaded to resign in your favor," said the doctor, laughing at the expression on the boys' faces.

"Well, who is the lucky fellow? I'm sure we'd like to know," asked Joe.

"Well, I have written the name of Joseph Conklin in place of the man exchanged," replied the doctor, laughing heartily.

"Oh! thank you, doctor, thank you, and I'm really to go with you? I can't begin to thank you enough," cried Joe, too happy to command words.

"Then don't try, my boy, but wait a bit, and in the near future do it with work."

"I will, indeed! I'll try to do everything required of me in as faithful a manner as possible," said Joe, earnestly.

"All right, all right, boys, you'll find enough to do after awhile."

“And I’ve nothing else to do about joining the expedition, sir?”

“Nothing, except to be on hand promptly at the depot the day we leave; a week from day after to-morrow is the day now set for our departure, I believe,” replied the doctor, and, after again expressing their thanks, the boys took leave of the jolly old naturalist.

CHAPTER II.

THE days dragged along as days only can to boys desirous of killing time, for the old man with the scythe appears to take a malicious delight in going his slowest pace when boys want him to step along smartly. This week to Joe Conklin had been anything but a happy one. His father had refused to give his consent to his going on the expedition, and had forbidden the further mention of the subject. Joe had always been a most dutiful son to a harsh and unloving father, and as yet had never openly disobeyed his commands. The evening previous to the expedition's departure had arrived, and once more Joe supplicated his father to allow him to go. This, instead of bringing about the desired result, put his father in a frenzy, and a wordy scene between the two ended in poor Joe receiving a sound thrashing.

Alas, for poor Joe's equanimity of mind! He might have overcome his temptations but for this; now he vowed he would go in spite of his father's refusal. The temptations had fast rolled themselves into a determination, as the unfortunate lad lay sobbing and moaning on his bed in his little attic chamber, moaning more in the spirit than the flesh, as Joe was one of those tough fellows that could stand a large amount of corporal punishment. He would have laughed at this drubbing from another boy, but from his father, given in the spirit that it had been, it made him sore at heart. Joe pulled himself together with an effort, repressed his feelings and said to himself:

"He's never been half what a father should be to me."

This palliated the thoughts of his resolve for a surreptitious leave taking. A mother's love Joe had never known, his mother having died in his infancy.

Joe leaned out of the window of his little room and wondered if he should ever come

back to it, for he had made up his mind that he would leave the house during the night unknown to his father. That gentleman had evidently been thinking of some such similar event happening, for just then, Joe heard a click in the lock of his door behind him.

“Ha!” exclaimed Joe, as he turned and in a mad rush threw himself against the door. But to no purpose. It was stout and would have resisted anything but an axe, and this Joe did not have. Joe then listened, and he heard his father’s footsteps receding from the door. Yes, he was locked in. He again walked to the window and looked down. Too far for a jump—forty feet or more. Joe looked to the right and then to the left. Tall elm trees extended their branches tantalizingly near, yet many feet from Joe’s window. He looked out and above. At the far corner of the roof a branch from a large elm all but touched the cornice.

"Oh! for some way to reach that limb," thought Joe.

Again he looked above him and noticed that the eaves trough ran along the edge of the roof above his window, extending to the corner of the house and all but touching it. Could he reach the eaves trough from his window, he knew he could swing along hand over hand until he came to the limb of the elm, and from thence to the ground it was an easy road. But to catch the eaves trough from his window! And, then would it support his weight? Here were two dilemmas. The first he could calculate upon, but the latter was an awful thought. There was an old jointed fishing rod in his room, and with this he measured the exact distance from the window sill up to the trough. He found that he could just reach it; but again that awful thought! If he launched his weight out on it, would it hold him? There was no way of ascertaining but by making the attempt, and this he decided upon doing as soon as the clock in the court house

tower struck one. The moon was nearly full and lent her aid in showing him the way out of his troubles. If he were only successful a few hours would find him on his way to the free and untrammeled trails of the prairies. There he would be restricted by no unreasonable father; there he would be a man dependent upon himself. Again, on the other hand, should that old trough overhead— No, no! He put such dismal thoughts out of his head; no use borrowing trouble. He had determined to try this one and only mode of escape. The prospect before him was well worth the risk, and thus he reasoned until the clock chimed the fateful hour. A shudder ran through his frame as his eyes glanced below. But he must look up and on, and trust that he might find the old trough strong and firm.

Joe lowered the upper sash and then stood out upon the sill, one leg on either side of the window sashes, supporting himself with these as he straightened up and reached

above for the edge of the trough. Securing this with his hands took his utmost endeavor, and indeed, as he slowly dropped his weight upon it his toes alone rested on the sill. Then he slowly drew his feet up from the sill. It was solid. Yes, solid and firm there, but what might it be further on where he had no trusty sill? His was the last window, and there was no succor until he reached the limb. "Faint heart will never win, so here goes," thought Joe, as he swung himself forward, withdrawing one hand and again grasping the edge of the trough a couple of feet beyond.

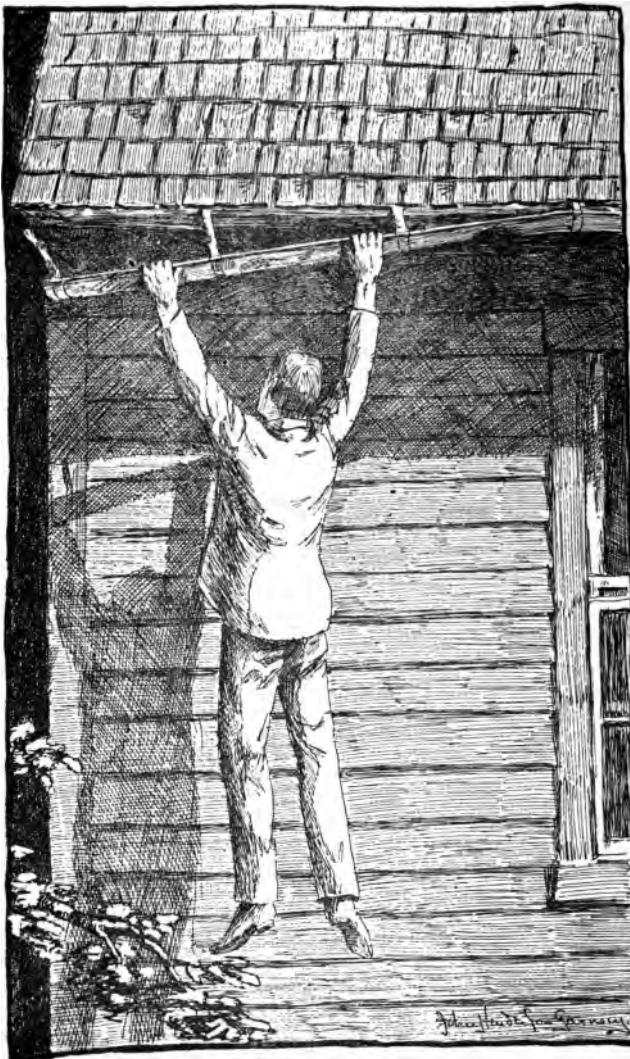
Then came the most awful scream—a blood-curdling yell from beneath, and poor Joe almost lost his grasp as his blood chilled to the very heart within him. A reverse swing, and he was back again with the support of the sill beneath his toes. He was feeling for the inside of his window with one foot when again came that harrowing sound from below, which at the unearthly hour of one seemed intensified a thousand

fold. Were the demons of the lower regions in wait for him beneath? Did their occult powers tell them that here was a boy about to disobey his father, and of a fearful doom soon to be his in consequence?

The last prolonged yell was followed by a sound more pronounced in its feline intensity, and Joe grinned in the silence of the moonlight as he again boldly swung himself clear of the window. Once launched forth on his perilous journey he did not stop to test or question the strength of the trough, but back and forth his lithe body swung through the air, and each time one of his hands loosed its hold his other was a couple of feet further on. Joe was quite an athlete, and this was no very great feat for him. The strain was only on his nerves. Half the distance safely over and he congratulated himself that his fears had been needless. The doleful yells of the cat had portended no direful result.

On and on he swung himself, almost to the end; the honest limb of the old elm was





HE FELT THE EAVES TRough BEGIN TO GIVE WAY UNDER HIS
WEIGHT.

all but within his grasp, when—Oh! Great Heavens! What made the eaves trough twist and give? What caused that creaking noise above him? His heart sank within him. Was his body going down, pulling the eaves trough along? He felt the boards turn and crack, then slowly sink with him. There was no time to turn back! Nothing but a convulsive clutching at the board, his finger nails digging into it as a drowning man clutches at a straw. Down! Down! Yes, he was surely sinking! The trough could not sustain his weight; and within an arm's length of the limb!

What Joe's thoughts were he hardly knew himself. He felt himself going, and braced himself for the fall, thinking that all would soon be over with him, when to his delight, before the boards entirely gave away and dashed him down to destruction, he felt the leaves and trailing branches of another smaller limb of the tree brush past him and with the energy of despair he let go his hands from the trough and clutched the

frail branches of the big limb that was just beyond him! His chances hung by a few threads! An oriole might have built its nest in these swinging branches and felt a safety in their very insecurity, but with Joe grasping them in his hands it was another matter. Were they going to hold him? He felt that they would have to, and then climbing up hand over hand as if they were an inch rope, and not stopping to question the situation, Joe soon found himself on a stout limb, and from there to another and then to the main trunk, and quickly sliding down was once more on terra firma!

What was there to tell of his escape? An open window and a hanging corner of the eaves trough. Joe might be said to have left the window open and have jumped to the ground, but the most credulous would never admit that he could have broken the eaves trough.

“And so your father relented at last, did he?” asked Tom, as he grasped Joe’s hand

the next morning in the crowd at the railway depot.

"No, he did not, and I've had a hard time to get here, but here I am and I want to get out of sight until the train leaves, for I have had to run away, after being locked up, and I am afraid he'll be after me," said Joe, as he gazed furtively about, although he looked none the worse for his midnight adventure.

"Then let's get out of here, and into one of the cars, where we can keep a watch from the window," urged Tom, as he hurriedly pulled Joe along after him.

Everything was in confusion; men and baggage a tumbling mass. The boys had no sooner found seats than Dr. Goon came along, evidently looking after his own party.

"My men are all here save one. Do any of you know whether Mr. Hugill is with us? He is to be a member of my party. Do you boys know anything of Mr. Hugill?"

"No, sir, I don't even know him," said Tom.

"Nor I, sir," echoed Joe.

"Well, I wish he'd come along; we have only ten minutes left before our allotted time for departing, and I don't want to leave without my First Assistant Bug Catcher," said the doctor, who leaned over the boys and looking out of their window, added hurriedly: "Here he comes now, we're all right." The boys looked out of the window and saw a very tall and handsomely dressed man step out of a coach the top of which was piled up with trunks and valises. This newcomer had long blonde side whiskers and was dressed in the very height of fashion. He paid and dismissed the cabman, and then ordered some men to put his baggage on board the train.

"Only one hundred pounds of baggage allowed to any one man, Mr. Hugill," said a man, stepping out from the crowd, who, the boys found out afterward, was the wagon-master, and had to superintend

the baggage and freight supplies. Mr. Hugill very quietly adjusted a glass in his right eye, and after surveying the wagon-master for a full minute, drawled out with a most inimitable English accent:

“Why, bless my soul! man, d’ye suppose I’m only going to spend the evening with ye?”

“Can’t help it, Mr. Hugill. Major Troxwell himself takes only one hundred pounds with him, and I’ve strict orders about it.”

“Blawst! man, cawn’t ye make an exception in my case? I’m not used to such things, ye know.”

“You’ll have to see the major, and get orders from him,” answered the wagon-master, shortly.

“Blawst this whole beastly Yankee nation! I *will* see the major,” said Hugill, walking hurriedly down the station platform to where the major stood talking to some of the officers, and Dr. Goon straightened himself up and laughed most heartily, as he said:

"That fellow Hugill is as good as a comedy any day; I'm glad we're not to go off and leave him."

"Was he out with the expedition last year?" asked Tom.

"Yes, he was in my party, and a very good man to work, too, when once out in the field," replied the doctor, and a moment after they saw Mr. Hugill approach the wagon-master and hand him a slip of paper. The man read it and then giving orders to some others they put all of Mr. Hugill's six trunks and many valises on board the train. The shrill whistle sounded out upon the early morning air of a delicious spring day. The bell rang and the conductor shouted:

"All aboard!"

Mr. Hugill made a rush for the cars, but was intercepted by a short man with a full square cut beard whom Joe had already discovered to be his father. That gentleman was much excited, and exclaimed wildly as he grasped Hugill by the coat collar:

"Where's Joe Conklin? Where's my Joe?"

"How do I know where your Joe is? My good man, step aside or I am left!"

"Stop this train! Where's the conductor? Hello, there!" excitedly shouted Mr. Conklin as Hugill rudely tore himself from his grasp and rushed to the now rapidly moving train and sprang upon the rear platform of the car that the boys were in. The train did not stop nor did Mr. Conklin, senior, see fit to get on. Mr. Hugill walked along the aisle looking for a seat and found an unoccupied one next to the boys. Addressing himself to them he said:

"I wonder who that crazy old duffer might have been that imagined I was kidnapping his Joe—Joe—Joe something, I did not catch the last name, ye know."

"Some escaped lunatic," replied Tom, winking at Joe.

Here Dr. Goon came back again through the car with a pleasant word for everybody, as he steadied himself with a hand on the backs of the seats against the jerking

motion of the cars. Joe was now fearful lest the doctor had discovered that he was running away, but he soon banished this from his mind.

"How d'ye do, doctor! Why, bless me! you look younger than when we journeyed together last summer; 'pon me word, ye're looking well!" cried Hugill, as he shook hands with the doctor.

"Thank you, Hugill, I feel as young as the rest of you, but let me introduce you to our fellow-workers, Mr. Tom Troxwell, son of our astronomer, and Mr. Joe Conklin. You might try to acquaint them with their future duties, if you will be so kind, as I must attend to my things in the next car."

"Right you are, doctor, I'll do what I can, ye know," returned Hugill.

The train was now bowling along at a rapid rate and for the first time Joe felt that he was safely on his way to the great unknown country of the Northwest. He had not been able until now to conquer the

feeling that something would yet occur to prevent him from going.

"I believe you were out with the expedition last year, Mr. Hugill," said Joe, with a shade of deference in his tone, for one who had already trod the glorious prairies was one to be respected in his estimation.

"Yes—I went with the expedition lawst year, ye know, and if I had known what beastly arrangements had been made for transportation this summer, I'd have made my arrangements to stay home," replied Mr. Hugill, stroking his long blonde side whiskers, with one hand.

"One hundred pounds of baggage does n't seem much," said Tom, wondering what kind of a comrade this would prove to be.

"One hundred pounds! Do n't ye know, at home that would be as nothing," cried Mr. Hugill.

"But how did you manage? I noticed that you had all of your trunks put in the baggage car," asked Joe, thinking that per-

haps this gentleman had some influence at court.

"They allowed me transportation for everything to Fort Buford; that's the point where we leave the Missouri, ye know, and take to wagons. Beyond that I have to furnish my own transportation to Fort Benton; that's at the head of navigation, so after parting with my boxes at Buford I will not see them again until we reach Benton in the fall. You see, we go due north from Buford to the line where we left off work lawst year. Thence west along the line to the Rocky mountains, where we connect with the terminus of the survey that was made back in the fifties. After connecting with a monument there, we strike south to Fort Benton, ye know, and either disband there or come down the Missouri again, and as I don't intend coming back to St. Paul I've taken all my belongings with me, ye know," said Hugill, in a drawling tone, yet withal in a pleasantly disposed way, to make these novices understand what was



the plan of the summer's campaign in as few words as was possible.

"Oh! I see, it's a long trip, isn't it?" said Joe.

"It will not seem so long, though it will take us all summer to make it."

The pine forests and tamarack swamps of Minnesota were rapidly followed by the rolling prairies of Dakota and the journey by cars to Bismarck was soon made. The wearisomeness of the ride was lessened by the novelty of the sights from the car windows, and in making friends among the men. Bismarck was reached in the afternoon of the next day, and without being allowed time for the inspection of this frontier town, every one was ordered to report on board the steamer, or rather the flat-bottomed steamboat, waiting for them at the landing, which was about a mile from the town.

All was confusion at the boat, as the loading had to be done before night. Over one hundred mules were tied up on the lower

deck, the wagons being lined all about the upper one. The commissary supplies and baggage had to be stowed away and then the men were told that they might make use of the great canvas-covered wagons for their state-rooms.

"This is pretty jolly, isn't it?" said Joe, as he and Tom threw their rolls of blankets into the bottom of a wagon and made down their bed.

The next morning with the first streak of daylight the boat was heading up the stream in the muddy and swollen Missouri. The scenery was changeless, cut banks and low bottoms, at which the boys were soon tired of gazing.

"I wonder what that big sheet of iron is for, up there on each side of the pilot-house," asked Tom.

"Let's go and ask the pilot," replied Joe.

"He may not want any one up there with him."

"Well, he can tell us so. Come on, let's go

up these little stairs and ask him if we may come in awhile."

"All right, you go on up and I'll follow," said Tom, and as the boys gained the door of the pilot-house the boat was quite near to the bank, on which the boys saw an Indian running up and down, waving his blanket, evidently signaling the boat; then the door of the pilot-house suddenly opened and the man at the wheel shouted:

"Come in! Come in, quick! if you don't want to get shot, quick!" and the boys had no sooner stepped inside than the heavy door swung shut behind them.

What was that peculiar twanging sound that whistled past their ears? and what made the pilot act so excitedly? It was the first time in their lives that a leaden messenger of death had flown by within a few inches of their heads, and as yet they were unconscious of their narrow escape.

CHAPTER III

"WELL, now, if that pesky varmint didn't play it pretty cunning! He don't show himself again so bravely," said the captain, as he peered over the top of the iron screen that had first attracted the boys' attention, holding in his hands a long needle-gun ready for a snap shot.

"Why! what's the matter?" asked both the boys together.

"Matter! That government pet sent a bullet mighty close to you chaps as you came in that door," replied the captain.

"Is that so? I thought I heard something sing by my ear but was not certain," said Tom.

"But I'm sure I heard it and could not imagine what it was, but I heard no report," declared Joe, stepping close up to the captain to watch for signs of the Indians.

"Of course you could not hear it from here, with all the noise of our engines," answered the captain, who then slipped over to the speaking tube and shouted through it to those below:

"Watch out fur Injuns down there! Lie down all hands and get ready yer guns!"

"Do you think there are more of them?" asked Tom, with a slight tremor of excitement in his voice.

"To be sure! Them fellers never hunts alone. Dare say that pint of brush above is full of them."

"Goodness! But I wish I had a gun, too!" cried Joe.

"Do ye? Well, now, my boy, thars a dozen in that ar' long box, back of the wheel. Jest get out a couple, and if ye know how ter shoot ye may have a chance. Keep her head a couple pints out in the stream, Bill."

"Aye, sir," said the pilot, speaking for the first time, as he made a turn of the wheel but keeping his eyes up the river.

The boys found some cartridges in with the rifles, and like all Minnesota boys knew well how to load them.

"That chap that took a pop at us disappeared as if he had sunk into the ground," remarked Joe.

"He most likely has crawled through the long grass up to that brush," replied Tom, keeping his eyes on that one spot, believing he saw something more than the leaves moving in the wind there.

"More water here than when we went down, eh, Bill?" said the captain.

"Aye, sir," returned that gentleman.

"We can clear the pint and stand off one pint more?"

"Aye, sir."

"Then let her have it, and we'll chance them infernal thieves doing any harm as we go by."

"Aye, aye, sir," answered the pilot, giving a slight turn to the wheel.

"How slowly we go!" exclaimed Joe, impatiently.

"Yes, the water is very swift here," said Tom, still keeping his eyes on the brushy point that they were slowly nearing.

"We are gaining now," continued Joe, as the captain had just rung for all the steam that could be crowded on.

"Do you think there are many Indians in that brush, captain? I am certain that I see something moving."

"I reckon it's just chuck full of them. If the boys down below had as good a chance as we've got up here, we could make a clean up, but them Injuns 'll keep back of that brush and chance a pop at us," said the captain.

The boat was now nearly opposite the brush, and the water was getting less rapid, so that their headway was increasing. The boys were in a fever of excitement, and, when the captain placed his hat on the end of his gun and thrust it out of the doorway they could hardly contain themselves. Several white puffs of smoke,—and this time the boys plainly heard the

report of the rifles from the bank—told them that their suspicions had been correct.

“Never touched! But it’s not their fault that they haven’t spoilt a new four dollar hat for me, and now let’s give it to them, boys!” shouted the captain, as he hauled in and examined his hat.

“But I can’t see a thing to shoot at,” declared Joe, peering over the top of the iron screen.

“Never mind, let’s all turn loose on that brush pile. Just as much luck in a chance shot hitting one of them as if we could see them to shoot at,” asserted the captain.

“All right, here goes!” said Joe, and, Bang! Bang! Bang! went the old needle-guns; hurriedly reloading, Bang! Bang! Bang! again went the guns, while a general fusilade was now started from the lower decks.

Nor was this received at all quietly by the Indians, as from different quarters of the

underbrush the white puffs of smoke arose and the reports of their rifles rang out.

“Ha! Ha! There’s one fellow done for,” shouted the captain, as the tall form of an Indian, gaudily bedecked in war paint and feathers shot up into the air with both arms thrown above his head, his rifle flying back from his outstretched hands.

“Lucky shot, whoever hit him,” replied Joe, throwing in another cartridge and again blazing away at the spot where he saw the Indian fall. Tom had not been idle, and from the empty shells scattered about his feet one would think that his chances of having sent some of them to their accounts were not small.

“They got more than they wanted that time,” said the captain, as the boat was now fast leaving the dangerous spot.

“One of them will never try it again, and more may have been wounded,” asserted Joe.

“The bullets whistled around here pretty lively for a while. We can thank that screen

for not getting hurt," said Tom, looking up the river for the first time since the first shot was fired.

"That's what we can, boys; but, Great Heavens, Bill, they've hit you!" exclaimed the captain.

"Aye, sir," answered the cool and undisturbed pilot, with his eyes steadily upon the water course in front of him.

"Not much, I hope," said Tom, looking uneasily at the blood pouring down the pilot's cheek.

"A bit of a scratch, that's all, and, capt'n, if you'll hold her a bit, I'll run down and wash my face and hunt up a bit of sticking plaster," and with this, the longest speech he had made in some time, he ran down the steps. The major now came rushing up much excited, but seeing Tom standing unhurt he became himself again.

"Hello! major, just too late. I've not had so much fun since I ran on the last sand bar. These kids of yours are good ones!"

"Nobody hurt, I'm glad to see. The pilot said a bullet barely scratched his face. He was in luck. Close call, that," remarked the major.

"Close call, yes, I should say! I gave them a chance at my hat and they couldn't hit it, and then we turned loose on 'em," replied the captain.

"I hope we'll have no more such work. How long will it take us now to reach Buford?" asked the major.

"If we have good luck we may reach it in four days."

"But what may happen, do you think, to delay us?"

"Most anything you can think of, from running on a sand bar to tying up for dark nights."

"Oh! that's a fact," said the major, and then the boys followed him down to his cabin. There they spent a few hours with him and then sauntered out between the decks. The shooting match, as it was called, had been talked over and was soon

forgotten by the most of them. The boys hunted about in search of amusement and came upon Mr. Hugill luxuriously ensconced on a pile of mule harnesses, smoking a pipe. He had a red skull cap on his head, his lower limbs were encased in a pair of corduroy breeches buttoning from the knees to the ankles, and a blue woolen shirt completed his costume. He did not look quite so aristocratic as on the day before.

"Well, Mr. Hugill, enjoying a smoke, are you?" asked Tom.

"Yes, I've my old togs on now, and I just wish my aunt, the Lady Frances Hugill, might see me, just as I am; it would make the old lady squirm in her chair; it would bring her to time, but it's too late now, ye know," drawled Mr. Hugill, between the puffs of smoke issuing from his lips. He pronounced certain vowels very broadly and every word with a strong English accent.

"What's too late? I don't understand you," said Tom, amused at the figure Mr. Hugill presented.

"I told the old lady—my aunt, ye know, is the Lady Frances Hugill—I told her she would have to increase my allowance, and blawst it if she did n't write and say she would not send me another remittance, that she had sent me the lawst penny she was going to! I wrote her if she did not I'd go off again on this beastly survey, and here I am, the only heir to the Hugill estates, nothing but a bug catcher, blawst the whole Yankee concern."

"Why did you not go off with the English? They are to have their men up there, too," asked Joe, thinking that if Mr. Hugill did not like this government he would better have staid among his own people.

"That would never do, ye know; they would all have heard of it at home."

"I think you might have done worse. It is something to be the First Assistant Bug Catcher. I'm only the second and I'd not change places with a senator," exclaimed Tom.

"I'm only third and I'd not exchange with the president," echoed Joe.

"That's all very well, now, but wait until we've been out a few months, ye know; then you will pine after the flesh pots of Egypt. Then you will think of a dish of potatoes as a beggar does of a plum pudding," said Hugill, puffing furiously at his pipe without getting any smoke. It had gone out.

"Don't they give us any potatoes when we are up there?" asked Tom, who thought that the fare on board the boat was simply abominable, and if it were to grow worse he feared he would starve.

"Nothing to eat and Indians shooting at us already!"

"Yes, but we've had the fun of shooting at them," returned Tom.

"Yes, and what profit is there in that? Had one of the beggars put a hole through you, your father would not have felt compensated had we killed the whole Indian nation. He was in a great stew down here,

and it took three of us to hold him from running up there when the beggars were peppering the sheet iron of the pilot house,'" said Hugill, as he puffed away at his pipe.

Here the conversation was interrupted by the shrill whistle of the boat sounding out over the waters, and the roustabouts were making preparations for a landing. Wood was to be taken on. It was very slow work going up against the heavy current, for here it was strong and turbulent, a mad, surging mass of muddy water, rushing and grinding against the sandy banks, constantly cutting under and tumbling down tons of earth that were instantly churned about and dissolved by the greedy waters.

The boat was nearing the bank. Two bells sounded and the engines ceased their powerful efforts. Nearer yet to the bank. The headway was now gone; in a moment more she was drifting down. One bell! Again the engines labor, and with the pilot rapidly turning the wheel her bow

approaches nearer; the plank is run out, and a deck hand, more venturesome than the rest, with a small rope in his hand takes a running jump! Ha! He scarcely finds a footing, and for a moment all expect to see him fall backward into the water, but by a desperate grasping at the willows he climbs up and pulls his small rope after him! Then all give him a rousing cheer, for it was a fine leap with the chances of a muddy bath if he failed. To his small rope is tied the heavy cable, which he hauls after him, and securing it he runs on up the bank and fastens it to the trunk of a gnarled cottonwood tree. The boat now comes close to the bank and the planks connect them with the shore. Here are long rows of cordwood, and back of the wood the tops of a number of Indian tepees are seen with the smoke curling above the forking lodge poles. The pungent odor of the box elder fires fills the air; the whole atmosphere is laden with that scent so peculiarly belonging to an Indian camp,

whether it be from the box elder fires, or the red willow—or killikinick as they call it—that they smoke. Then came the faces of the squaws and pappooses peering from over the wood and at the ends of the piles, while the noble redmen themselves, in dirty blankets tightened at their waist with belts full of government cartridges, stood in stoical silence at the landing place. A repulsive looking half-breed acted as interpreter, and the captain soon made a bargain with the chief for the amount of wood he wanted.

“Come, boys,” said the doctor to Joe and Tom, “let’s go on shore while those fellows are loading on the wood and see what we can find.”

“All right, sir,” they both shouted, and followed by Hugill, who had climbed down from his seat on the harness, they all went on shore.

“What a dirty looking lot,” said Tom.

“Yes, they are not over particular about some things,” replied Joe, as they picked

their way, avoiding the remnants of deer that lay decaying on the ground and over which swarms of flies were buzzing. The ground was littered with chips and bones, bits of buckskin, odds and ends of all kinds of fur, together with old moccasins and worn out rags of blankets.

They strolled about the camp. Most of the tepees were closed, however, and they were about to return to the boat, when a lodge larger than the rest and standing somewhat away from the others attracted their attention. This had its entrance thrown wide open, the corners of the skin covering pulled back showing the interior to all observers.

"What kind of a layout is this?" asked Tom, peering inside.

The far side was divided off from the main interior by a hanging curtain of deer hides nicely tanned and curiously embellished with rude drawings and figures. A curious chain of polished elk's teeth hung down from above, and many eagles' feathers

elsewhere adorned the background. The curtain of buckskin was fringed with porcupine quills, and in front of this was what evidently appeared to be a rude altar, although at first sight this did not appear as such to our hunters after specimens.

The doctor stepped in and looked about him. All was quiet, and no one appeared to be present to take umbrage at this inspection. On the queer structure of willow sticks that afterward proved to be the altar lay many curious things. At either end was a collection of odds and ends that would have defied the pockets of any boy to equal. The rattles from the tails of innumerable rattlesnakes, rabbit's feet, bear's claws and owls' heads seemed to predominate. In the center of the rude table lay an article that the boys would have passed by unnoticed but upon which the doctor's eyes were fastened.

"Ha! ha! what's this? A phytolite! and one of the best and rarest specimens I've ever found," said the doctor, bringing it out

for more careful inspection in the sunlight, and in his excitement, forgetting all about the laws of "*meum et tuum*," of which,



A GAUNT OLD SAVAGE * * * RUSHED ON THE DOCTOR WITH
UPLIFTED KNIFE.

however, he was most forcibly reminded by a weird and gaunt looking old savage who

had followed him out and with a yell of execration now rushed upon the doctor with an uplifted knife. The doctor's connection with this story would have here found an end had it not been for the quickness and agility of Joe. The infuriated savage sprang past Joe, but the lad was yet quicker. Joe's right hand grasped the uplifted wrist of the savage and the fingers of his left seized upon the tangled scalp lock of the murderous redman. Joe's left foot was behind the Indian's heels and with a sudden but dexterous movement the villain was thrown sprawling on his back! The knife which he had clutched so wickedly went flying through the air which was filled with the yells of the Indian. Some one would surely have been hurt had not others of the expedition been close by, and now an excited mob stood about the participants in this incident. All were talking at once. English and the Indian dialect were so commingled that neither could be understood. The old fellow that had suffered from Joe's

dexterous handling was haranguing his tribe, and with wild gesticulations pointing at the doctor. Then the half-breed interpreter was pushed to the front and when silence had been obtained he said:

"Mena-tonah-haha is the great medicine man of this tribe, the Gros Ventres, and he says that while he was sleeping back of his altar the 'chief-that-has-lost-his-scalp' (pointing to the doctor who stood with his hat in his hand; as it was a very warm day he had left his wig in his state-room) came and stole the god of the Gros Ventres, and that he has it now in his pocket!"

Then came angry yells from the Indians, the squaws and the pappooses seemed to be the most infuriated. All looked at the doctor for an explanation, and that good man looked rather sheepish as he put his hand in his pocket and produced what appeared to be a smooth conical stone, rounded at the top.

"That's it," said the half-breed, and then

the air was filled with yells, grunts and gutturals of all kinds from the Indians.

"Ha! ha! doctor, this bit of iconoclastic robbery will have to be atoned for, ye know; 'pon me soul, ye'll be out a good pound of tobacco now," cried Hugill, laughing, and the doctor, taking the hint, sent Tom back to the boat for a supply of that weed which is more holy in the sight of the Indian than all the gods of his forefathers.

The doctor then handed the stone that he had pronounced to be a phytolite to the interpreter who gave it to the medicine man. That worthy carefully wrapped it in his blanket and disappeared before Tom returned with the tobacco. The doctor distributed this luxury in a judicious manner among the Indians and all seemed again in harmony. A few hours after, again on board the boat, puffing and steaming its way northward, found Dr. Goon walking up and down the forward deck in a most disconsolate mood.

"You look troubled, sir," Joe remarked, as he passed him for another turn.

"Yes, yes. Oh! Joe, that phytolite! An opportunity of a life time gone! I should have had that, Joe. No mistake, it should have been mine," lamented the doctor.

"I knew it, sir, and therefore acted without your advice; here it is, sir!" said Joe, taking the stone out of his coat pocket and handing it to the doctor, who when he had satisfied himself that it was the same, the treasure of past generations of Gros Ventres, most likely, and worshiped by this one, fairly danced with joy.

"Why, Joe, Joe, my boy! How did you manage it? How did you secure this treasure?" exclaimed the doctor.

"Well, sir, when I went back to the boat that time, I thought to myself that the half-breed would certainly not have much reverence for the thing, and so I took along an extra pound of tobacco and a pint of alcohol, to bribe him with. I bought him over very easily, and he gave the medicine man a

taste of the spirits, telling the old thief that it was the elixir of life and would make him live for ever. Then it was no trouble to make a trade for the stone. The faithless priest will, with a few lies, make the tribe think that it was stolen, but by that time we shall be far away."

"Joe! Joe! This is not all fair and honorable. I can hardly commend such action. Joe, I—I, ah! well, it was done in a good cause, but, mind me, sir, don't you do it again!"

CHAPTER IV.

THE days flew by very quickly to Tom and Joe, and before they had become well accustomed to the novelties of the voyage on the upper Missouri they found themselves at Buford. The trip, however, was becoming tedious, no more Indians had been seen, and only an occasional buffalo or two swimming the river, or the stopping for wood broke the monotony of their lives. Ft. Buford at length came in view, and the cheerful sight of the old stars and stripes waving proudly over the officers, quarters was greeted by cheers from all on board.

The bustle and confusion of unloading was made more exciting by the braying of the mules. These poor brutes, so delighted at the prospects of terra firma once more, gave vent to the most earsplitting brays.

The wagon-master was in his element,
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and gave orders on all sides for the unloading of the boat. He was no respecter of persons, and poor Mr. Hugill, looking about among the miscellaneous piles of baggage for a missing valise, his long legs leaping from place to place, attracted the attention of this master of ceremonies.

"Look lively, Hugill, and lend a hand with this dunnage here!" said he.

"Beg pardon, but ye cawn't know who you are talking to! I did not come out here to be ordered about by a blawsted idiot, ye know, nor to lend a hand to anyone. I never heard of such impudence!" replied Hugill, his arms a-kimbo, and his legs stretched wide apart, one foot on a trunk and the other on a roll of blankets.

"Then don't get in a good man's way," cried the wagon-master, grasping the trunk by its leather handle, and, with a sudden jerk drawing it out from under Hugill, and tossing it on his own shoulder he carried it to one of the wagons, leaving Hugill sprawl-

ing on his back among the luggage. Every one set up a roar of laughter, much to Hugill's annoyance, but as he then found the article for which he had been searching he called to Tom, who stood near him:



"THEN DON'T GET IN A GOOD MAN'S WAY."

"Here, young fellow, assist me with this; we want to get our own traps loaded as soon as possible, ye know."

"Drag it over yourself. I've got my own luggage to look after," was Tom's rather ungracious reply, as he did not like the way he had been spoken to, nor had he been told to obey orders from Mr. Hugill.

"I'll help you," offered Joe, thinking that it might save trouble. He grasped one handle of the heavy valise and they carried it over to the wagon.

"Here, Hugill, this is the doctor's wagon," said the wagon-master, who had pretended not to notice Hugill's mishap and calmly pointing to a four-mule team at his right.

"That one?"

"Yes."

"Thank you, Mr. Wagon-boss, I'm glad you've provided a good one for us," said Hugill.

"And see that you don't pile in more than you are allowed," replied the wagon-master, as he walked off.

"It's enough to make an English gentleman insane, ye know, to be spoken to by such a fellow. It's a beastly shame, 'pon

me word," growled Hugill in an undertone, as they put the valise in the wagon.

"I suppose Tom and I are to put our baggage in here, too," remarked Joe.

"Yes, and there will be room for all we want to take. I have some things I don't need at present, and I shall ship them to Benton by the next boat, but everything I want, I'm going to take, ye know."

"I have not more than twenty-five pounds, and I could claim some of yours and put it in as mine, if you wish."

"Thanks, awfully; if that cad bothers me I'll fix him, ye know," said Hugill, who had not relished his unlooked-for tumble and had not forgotten it.

"I think he was very impertinent," ventured Joe.

"Why, the fellow is most likely drunk and doesn't know what he is about," grumbled Hugill.

After the wagons had been loaded and the men had stowed everything away they all formed a long line and as the wagon-master

expressed it, they "pulled out," and that evening took their first steps overland toward the boundary line. The work of establishing the line was commenced in the fall of 1872 and prosecuted until mid-winter to take advantage of the frozen condition of the ground about the lakes and swamps of Northern Minnesota, through which it extended.

The summer of '73 was expended in reaching the dividing line between Dakota and Montana, and it was at this point that they were now to resume work. The work was done jointly by the United States and British governments. A commissioner invested with full powers was the head of each command, which was necessarily divided into a number of smaller parties.

The astronomical party, or, as it was commonly called, the "Star Baggers," took the lead. They—that is, the one of each nationality—would proceed westward by compass and then each, from astronomical

observations, establish a point as nearly as science would let them as a tangent point on the forty-ninth parallel of latitude. It is needless to say that this point was never identically the same as found by each government, but the difference was always divided, and it is wonderful after all things are considered how close these two points would be—sometimes but fifty feet and seldom more than three hundred apart.

This done the astronomical parties would again proceed westward, and the chief engineer go to work laying out the line between these main points. His business was to find the correct places for the mounds that were to be built by the party called the "mound builders." These mounds were placed at irregular intervals, but so that, standing at any one, you could see one east and one west of you. They would be from half a mile to seven miles apart, according to the surface of the country. The mound builders were to erect mounds at these points twelve feet square



at the base and six feet high. They were to be made of stone, when stone could be found, otherwise of sods. A sheet iron plate a foot square, with the letters "U. S. N. B. S." cut in it, was supposed to be buried beneath each mound. The iron for this purpose was brought along. It was in sheets a half inch thick and about three by six feet, and as blacksmithing was done under difficulties on the prairie, it's not safe to say that one will be found under each mound. These mounds were the initial points for the smaller topography parties to work from. There were three or four of these on each side of the line, whose business it was to get the detail of all small streams, rivers, mountains and hills for a distance of five miles on each side of the line. This would make a map of ten miles of country through this, at that time, unknown region.

The naturalist's party (to which our young friends belonged), or as it was commonly called "The Bug Catchers," was

another feature of this great work. They were to investigate the flora and fauna and collect specimens for the Smithsonian Institute. The expedition, as we have said, had "pulled out," and after about three miles' travel, was on a high table land, giving a grand view of the mouth of the Yellowstone river flowing into the Missouri. The bottom lands were a mass of dark green from the foliage of the cottonwood trees, and the level prairie stretched off as far as the eye could reach like a great yellow sea. Tom came back and said:

"The wagon-master says that we are going to pitch camp down in that grove about three miles from here."

"I'm glad it's no farther, for I'm getting hungry," said Joe.

"It is not very far, and we will not have to wait long. The wagon-master said that you and I would have to help pitch our own camp, and help the cook to take his stove and provisions out of the wagon; that there is no one else in our party but you

and me, and Hugill, the cook, and the doctor, of course."

"The two teamsters."

"Yes, I forgot them."

"We don't seem to have a *very* large party."

"No, but from what I have heard we are to travel with the astronomical party; they always stay the longest in one camp."

"Why is that?"

"So that we can have time to make collections and don't have to be pulling up camp and pitching it again every day."

"Oh, I see. That will be more pleasant for us, I should think."

"Yes, the topography parties—and there are three of them—have to move camp every day," said Joe.

They now commenced to descend toward the lowlands again, and in less than an hour the great long string of mule teams had been corralled, the mules been taken off and turned loose to find their own feed amid the sage brush growing at the foot of

the bluff. The doctor's party had a large cook's tent and two smaller wall tents. In one of these was placed the doctor's and Hugill's bedding, the other was taken possession of by Tom and Joe. It was the first time that the boys had ever slept in a tent, and they were discussing the pleasures entailed, when Hugill put his head inside of their canvass and called:

"Come out here, Joe, I've got something for you to do, ye know."

Joe went outside and followed Hugill over to his tent, asking, as they went:

"What is it, Mr. Hugill?"

"I want one of you young fellows to make down my bed every night; there's my roll of blankets on that side," and without further words he walked off into the darkness, leaving Joe very much astonished.

Joe was about to disregard the order and go back to his own tent, but, looking inside, by the dim light of the hanging lantern he saw something on the ground which made

him think otherwise, and in a few moments he had Hugill's blankets unrolled and made down upon the ground for his bed. When he returned he did not inform Tom what had been wanted of him and the boys were soon asleep. Just how long they had slumbered they did not know, but they were aroused by cries and yells from the next tent of,—

“Murder! Oh! Oh! Murder! Help! Help! Ah! Oh! Ouch! Help me, here! Help! Help!”

CHAPTER V.

IT did not take Tom half a minute to pull on his clothes, but Joe was rather slow about getting out and every man in that part of the camp was about the doctor's tent when he reached it.

"What's the matter?" asked Joe, quite innocently, for the yells and imprecations of a long legged individual, exceedingly *décollete* as to dress, were heard above the hum of many voices.

"I reckon Mr. Hugill's gone crazy," said the wagon-master, standing near Joe, for by the fitful glare of a large bonfire burning between the two rows of tents, the excited and gesticulating figure could be seen to be that of Mr. Hugill.

"Reckon he's gone distracted, 'cause he had ter part with them Saratogers," said a mule driver, laughing.
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"Throw some water on 'im," suggested another, and it actually began to look as if he were in a fit. He stormed, raved, and swore most incoherently, and it was some time before Tom, who was quite near to him, could catch the drift of his speech.

"Oh! My back! Ah! Ouch! My legs! Oh! Oh! Oh!" yelled Hugill.

"What's the matter with you?" shouted a dozen voices.

"Oh! That young scamp! Oh! My back feels as if it were on fire," moaned Hugill, quieting down a little.

"What in the world is the matter with you? You make more noise than all my mules," said the wagon-master, crowding up to Hugill to see what was making all the trouble.

"Oh! For heaven's sake find the doctor! That young cad has done it on purpose, ye know. Where's Joe? Just let me get hold of him! Blawst him, I'll break every bone in his body!" roared Hugill, turning around and trying to straighten the pole of his tent

which he had half knocked down in his mad rush out. Hugill went back into his tent followed by the cook of his party and one or two others who offered to assist him in his trouble. Tom heard Hugill mutter "I wish the doctor were here to pull them out," and then he hunted around to find Joe. This young man had kept quite on the outside of the crowd, prepared to bolt should anyone attempt to lay hands on him. Seeing Tom approach, he asked:

"Is he much hurt, do you think?"

"He doesn't seem to be, but no one can find out what's the matter with him. He's vowing vengeance on you; what did you do to him?"

"I did not do anything to him; only did just what he told me to do. Ha! Ha! Ha!"

"What was it? Tell a fellow all about it, can't you?"

"Ha! Ha! Ha! Didn't he cut a pretty figure? You see it was this way: he called me out there and told me to make down his bed for him. Well, I didn't come out as his

servant, but I happened to see some prickly pears growing in his corner of the tent and I thought I would do as he told me to," and then both of the boys again laughed in blissful contemplation of Mr. Hugill's discomfiture.

"Oho! What a jolly go! I wonder if it will lay him up?" said Tom, questioningly.

"Oh, no; he had two heavy blankets under him; the cacti could not much more than have just pricked through; he's more scared than hurt," replied Joe.

"He'll not want you to make down his bed again; he must think we're his valets."

"I hope the doctor'll not be mad about it."

"No danger of that. He'll enjoy a joke on Lord Hugill as well as the rest. Were there any prickly pears on the doctor's side?"

"No, there are not many of them anywhere here; more just where I laid Lord Hugill's blankets than any other spot about camp," replied Joe.

The boys went back to their own bed. It was several days before Hugill entirely

recovered from his mishap, and it was only the most earnest protestations on the part of Joe, who accounted for it by the darkness, that prevented retaliation on Hugill's part..

This was the first camping out that the boys had ever participated in and they were delighted with it. They remained in this place for four or five days waiting for their escort. They were also much pleased in the improvement in the culinary department. They had a jolly little Irishman, named Pat Molloy, for their cook, and he prided himself upon doing more with limited resources than any other cook in the expedition.

“Good morning, doctor. Are we to remain here another day?” asked Hugill at the breakfast table, the third morning of their encampment.

“So it seems, Mr. Hugill,” replied the doctor.

“It's beastly stupid here, ye know. Cawn't we take a spin up the river to-day, and see what we can pick up?”

“Yes, we might find something of interest. Say, Pat, where did you learn to make such fine cakes?” asked the doctor, as he helped himself for the third time.

“In the kitchen, sor,” answered Pat, as he turned those frying on the griddle, for their dining room and kitchen were one.

“Ha! Ha! Pat, that’s very good. Well, we’re going out for a little walk this forenoon, and we may be late for dinner, so don’t worry about us if we are.”

“All right, sor.”

“And, boys, you bring a hand net and a few tin boxes which Mr. Hugill will find you, while I hunt up my book. We’ll make our first attempt this morning.”

“Yes, sir, we’ll be ready in a moment,” replied Tom, as he went after the required articles.

The doctor, accompanied by the two boys (leaving Mr. Hugill behind, busy at some work of preparation for the future), walked up the river bottom toward the bluffs. It was more like a grand picnic to Joe than

any idea of work he could form. The doctor talked as he gaily trod over the soft grass and mosses.

"Now, keep your eyes open, boys, and see who will find the first new specimen," said he.

"All right, sir. I think we can find any number," replied Joe.

"Why, we've passed no end of queer flowers," exclaimed Tom.

"It's not so easy as you imagine to find what we want. Last summer gave us a full list of the common plants; now what we want is something rare, or, at least, what is not known to be a native of these regions," said the doctor.

"See! doctor, what's this? I've never seen a flower like this," cried Tom, holding up a small yellow flower.

"Oh, that's common enough, and you must have seen them growing in gardens; it belongs to the order of orchidaceæ a species of cypripedium, the common lady slipper; you know it, surely," answered the

doctor, and so it was with everything they found: He would tell them all about it and say, "quite common."

On they went, occasionally resting beneath the shade of some immense cottonwood.

"Make the most of this shade, boys, for when we leave this we'll find no more trees for a while," cried the doctor, as he threw himself at full length on the ground.

"Oh, we surely will find some trees," said Tom, following his example.

"No, not a shrub large enough to cast a shadow. We may see a bit of stunted juniper on some point of bluff, but once on the prairies we'll find no more trees until we get to the Sweet Grass Hills, and that's almost at the end of our trip."

"Oh my! what a gloomy prospect!" said Joe, who had been searching about on the far side of the tree.

"Got another rare one, Joe?" asked the doctor, as Joe stood looking at a flower he had just picked.

"It's like all the rest, I'm afraid, *quite common.*"

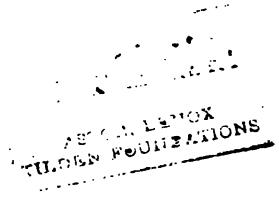
"Nothing new under the face of the sun, but let's see it," and Dr. Goon raised up to take the flower.

"It's pretty, any way," said Joe.

"Well! now, this is something odd. Can't say that I know it. Very strange! Leaves ovate, lanceolate, obscurely reticulated—hum! Yes, yes, column acutely two horned at summit, spike secund, minutely pubescent like the *Goodyera repens*, I should think. Yes, I'm right about that, but the segments of the perianth are straight, lateral ones longer than the flower, but that's like the *orchis spectabilis*. This is certainly very queer, very queer; must be a sport. This is a find, indeed, quite a find," as he carefully handled the flower.

"I'm glad we've got something at last," exclaimed Joe.

"Say, my boy, see if you can't find another; if not, get the roots and any leaves or branches that this came from," said the





THEY ALL SAW AN INDIAN * * * SLOWLY WALKING TOWARD THEM.

doctor, carefully pressing the flower in his book.

Joe did as requested, and then the party returned to camp. Tom went to his father's tent and spent an hour with him telling him of his first day's work in the field of natural history. Tom heard that his party was to have one of the mounted scouts attached to it, and of course lost no time in going back and telling them the news.

"Yes," said Tom, "we are to have a new addition."

"Who is he?" asked Joe.

"I don't know the gentleman's name, but he is a dandy, and no mistake."

"What do you mean, without joking?"

"Just what I say. He is not very good looking, but he is a howling swell; here he comes now, and I dare say he wants to see you, Pat."

Pat looked up from his work over the bread pan, and they all saw an Indian, gorgeously bedecked in paint and feathers, slowly walking toward them. He appeared

pretty well encased in a government blanket with a belt full of cartridges encircling his waist. From beneath the blanket appeared his moccasined feet, and above stretched as villainous a looking countenance as ever an Indian boasted. He had on an old yellow broad brimmed hat, the top cut out in such a way as to leave long points hanging down as an adornment.

"Faith an' Oi'm not goin' to cook fur any sich durty divils ez that," cried Pat, as he now comprehended that this was to be the addition to his mess, of which Tom had spoken.

"Never mind, Pat, he wont be with us always, and he is to provide fresh meat for us," said Tom.

"Faith an' av the rid blayguard can hilp us out wid a bit av fresh mate, Oi'll not moind 'im," returned Pat, who would sacrifice even his love of country to his pride in cooking.

"Ugh! Muck-a-muck," said the newcomer, walking up to the cook in the most

solemn manner and leaning his rifle against the mess chest.

"Phat do yer soi, ye bloody spalpeen? If that blunderbuss is loaded ye can take it out av this," replied Pat, but the only reply of the Indian was to open his mouth as widely as possible and point with his index finger to its cavernous interior.

"Sure an' ye'd look better if ye'd go an' wash yer face an' kape yer ugly mouth shut," continued Pat, quite seriously.

"Ugh! Ot-a muck-a-muck," said the scout, with innumerable gutteral sounds, which would have puzzled a phonograph, and certainly defies onomatopœia.

"Why don't ye spake English, ye durty haythen, an' thin Oi could understand ye," exclaimed Pat, not taking his hands out of the bread pan.

"Me heap speak um! Me heap big Injun! Me Chonka-ta-ketchah-ha," (pronounced Shonkaw-taw-ketchaw-haw,) said the scout, who was most providentially prevented from taking offence at Pat's language by

his utter ignorance of it. He certainly believed in the old adage concerning those who help themselves, for he reached out and took a plate, knife and fork and without the superfluity of an invitation began to fill his plate with cold baked beans from a pan that sat on the table. He then proceeded in the most solemn manner to shovel them down his throat, alternately using the knife in his right, and the fork in his left hand.

"He has a good appetite," remarked Tom, as the redman reached out and helped himself to three slices of bread.

"He'll never starve, if there's anything around to eat," said Joe, who noticed a can of axle grease on the ground, and without a word he placed it on the table in front of the Indian, who, thinking it was some white man's delicacy, spread a liberal supply of it on his bread; from the gusto with which he ate it, nothing could be said against it as a luxury, at least to him.

"Our mule driver will be out of luck when he finds his can empty," gasped Tom, stuffing his handkerchief in his mouth to keep from laughing.

"He'll have to settle it with him," answered Joe, giggling in spite of his determined attempt to keep a straight face.

"If he isn't dead by morning I'll give up," whispered Tom.

"I don't think there is anything in it to hurt him," replied Joe.

"You go with us, do you?" asked Tom, when this new addition had satiated himself, and was giving vent to grunts of satisfaction, as he loosened his belt to the last hole.

"No sabe," grunted the Indian.

"Can-you-speak-English?" repeated Tom, speaking very slowly and in as gruff a voice as his age would allow.

"Heap speak um!"

"How-soon-we-find-buffalo?"

"No sabe."

"You sabe—buffalo? Buf-fa-lo!"

"Ya-as."

"You understand everything I say?"

"Ya-as!"

"How soon do we find buffalo?"

"Ya-as!"

"Don't you think you are an old fraud?"

added Tom, disgusted with the redman's stupidity.

"Ya-as," replied the Indian, as solemnly as ever. Picking up his rifle and hiding it in the mysterious folds of his blanket he slid out from among them, his broad back bearing the big letters ^{US} ID on the blanket that covered it.

CHAPTER VI.

A FEW mornings after they had left the Missouri, Tom was awakened before daylight by the plaintive notes of the cavalry bugle sounding "boots and saddles," which was soon followed by the cooks of all parties shouting, "roll out, roll out!" It was a breakfast by candle-light that morning, and then a long day's journey before they came into camp again.

"What creek is this?" asked Joe, as he took a bucket down to get some water.

"This is Poplar river," replied Tom.

"You don't think this thing can be Poplar river?"

"That's what the wagon-boss told me. They say a stream you can't jump over in this country is called a river."

"Don't say wagon-boss, it sounds so slangy."

"That's what all the mule whackers call him, and if a fellow picks his words here they will think him a pilgrim forever," said Tom, with a show of braggadocio. Joe was a boy who had more mischief in him naturally than Tom could conjure up in his brain, yet he was always studiously careful in his language.

"But you are not one of them, and it sounds just as well to say mule-driver."

"Oh! Don't preach!"

"I don't mean to, but if to use gentlemanly language is to be considered a pilgrim, let them think you one."

"All right, Joe, if you ever make a slip of the tongue, I'll lecture you for an hour."

"You may; it would do me no harm, I dare say. I noticed your father, the other day, talking about mule-drivers to the wagon-master, and he did not say 'whackers' nor 'skimmers,' and no one thinks he is a pilgrim," said Joe, as he dipped up a bucketful of water and Tom,

taking hold of the other side of it, helped to carry it up to the cook.

They were three or four days in reaching the line, as the forty-ninth parallel was called by them. They found the monument where the work was discontinued the year before, and here the command divided up, each going about its own special work. The escort of infantry was divided among the three engineer parties, but the cavalry went with the astronomical division, which was always to be in advance of the others. Each small party had one Indian scout, who was to act as hunter and messenger.

"What's going to be done to-morrow, have you heard, Tom?" asked Joe.

"The astronomical party goes west twenty miles to establish a line point."

"I wonder if we go with them."

"I don't know, but I heard that this is the last time that the whole party will be together until fall."

"I expect we will meet different parties every once in a while."

"I don't much think so, for if the doctor's party goes with father we will be in advance all the time."

"Where do the mound builders come in?"

"They follow after the line party and put up the mounds."

Dr. Goon's party went with Major Troxwell's on the following day. They finished their twenty-mile stretch by noon and encamped at a fine spring, which came out of a bank of earth not far from a large swamp. The water probably came from the swamp, but coming through the earth it was well filtered and cold.

"I'm going to try to get one of those antelopes we saw yesterday," said Tom, who sat on the edge of his bed, polishing his rifle. The government had furnished all the civilians with Sharpe's rifles and ammunition.

"I think we could get one just as well as not," replied Joe.

"Will you go, if the doctor will let us?"

"Yes, I don't think he has anything for us to do to-day, but you had better ask him; he is in his tent now with Hugill, and they are looking over some big books together," said Joe, and Tom laid down his rifle and went to the doctor's tent; returning in a few moments, he announced:

"All right, we can go."

"What did he say about it?"

"Oh, nothing but 'go ahead and don't shoot yourselves.'"

"Then we'll try to get some antelope meat," replied Joe, and the boys shouldered their rifles, which were very much like the needle guns the soldiers carried, only that they were a little shorter in the barrels. They were on a rolling prairie, the surface of the ground being full of shallow ravines cutting the prairie in all directions, and which in that country are called coulees. The boys had not gone more than a mile from camp when Joe, who was a little in advance, exclaimed:

"Crouch down, Tom, there's a lot of antelopes just beyond us." Tom dropped down on his hands and knees, and crawled up to where Joe was crouching down in the grass, then whispered:

"Where are they?"

"Right ahead of us, about three hundred yards; we had best crawl along here in the grass until we think we are within one hundred yards of them, and then we can rise up and let them have it," said Joe, in a whisper.

They both crawled along as stealthily as a couple of coyotes for about fifteen minutes, when Tom whispered:

"I think we must be right on top of them; let's stand up an' pump the lead into 'em."

Raising the hammers of their guns and having everything ready to take aim they sprang to their feet simultaneously, but neither of them put his gun to his shoulder because the antelopes stood on a rise of ground about half a mile away

from them, calmly staring at these strange bipeds encroaching on their feeding grounds.

"Well, I declare! I thought you said we were within three hundred yards of them," said Tom.

"And so we were, but they must have scented us; they see us now so plainly, that there is no use trying to crawl up on them," replied Joe, as one of the handsome animals here raised his striped throat, and sniffed the danger in the air. He was an old buck and a beautiful specimen. Again he elevated his delicate nose two or three times, and trotted around the half dozen timid does that stood looking as if their lord and master were needlessly alarmed, for surely those queer-looking strangers could not hurt them.

"It did not take them long to get over there. Do you know, I've read that they can be attracted by any curious thing like a flag waving," said Tom, looking longingly at the game safe beyond his bullets.

"Yes, I remember in 'The Boy Hunters of South America,' I read that the boys used to stand on their heads, which unusual sight would bring the game close enough to be shot, but I don't believe it, all the same."

"We might try it. I've a large white handkerchief in my pocket that will do, and we can put it on a ram rod and soon have a flag flying," said Tom; taking the jointed ram rod out of the butt of his gun, and screwing the pieces together he soon had his small flag flying signals of anything but peace. They lay down in the grass beneath the flag, which certainly had some effect on the antelopes for they looked much more eagerly in their direction, and showed all the signs of curiosity.

"They are feeding this way now," said Joe, who had cautiously raised his head.

"I don't think they will mind seeing us now their attention is all taken with the flag."





"UGH! HOW! HOW!"

"Don't show too much of yourself to them."

"I want to have a look at them through my field glass."

"That will make them look close enough to shoot at," laughed Joe.

The antelopes came cautiously toward them, evidently attracted by the flag, yet they were much too distant to shoot at. So intent upon the quarry in front of them were the boys, that they failed to hear the light footfalls of a horse coming from behind, until, hearing a deep guttural "Ugh! How! How!" they sprang to their feet, much surprised to see the stoical features of their Indian scout. This gentleman sat upon a pinto kiyus and a long lariat trailed upon the ground behind him. His rifle rested across the pommel of his saddle, while behind him was tied the carcass of an antelope. He appeared oblivious to the fact that the boys had been trying to decoy the game that now scampered off

across the prairie, showing their white rumps like the sails of so many miniature boats.

"Aha! You've got one," exclaimed both of the boys together, and the Indian smiled complacently as he responded:

"Tush."

"Shot him through the head," remarked Tom, touching the ugly wound with his finger.

"Tush."

"That word must mean 'yes,'" said Tom to Joe, in an undertone.

"I expect so. I wonder what tribe this fellow belongs to," replied Joe, and as the scout appeared to be in rather a good-natured mood, Tom looked very wise and pointed at him, saying interrogatively:

"Sioux?"

The Indian shook a negative with his ugly head. He then raised his right hand, the palm extended upward as a man might raise some water; bringing it to his lips he

threw his head backward as if drinking; he then placed a hand at each side of his head and flapped them both slowly.

"Oh! I know that sign; father has told me the tribal signs of lots of different bands of Indians. You're a River Crow?"

"Tush," assented the Indian, smiling what might have been considered among his own people a pleasant smile, but which to the boys looked like a ghastly grin.

"That word 'tush' means 'yes,' you see, and he is a River Crow."

"Tush, fodder Sioux (here the Indian drew his finger across his throat, making the sign of that tribe), mudder (and again his first pantomimic performance); Sioux—seeche—me no Sioux," said the Indian.

"He has renounced his father's people for some reason and claims to be a River Crow; they are always friendly, father says," interpreted Tom, quite grandly.

"I think that word, 'seeche,' must mean bad; ask him, Tom," said Joe, who, see-

ing that Tom was doing so well as interpreter, did not like to interfere himself.

"Sioux bad,—Sioux se-chee?" asked Tom, most grandiloquently.

"Tush! tush! Sioux see-chee-nepo-otah-wasechee, nepo otah ekeechetah."

"I suppose you understand all that," said Joe, laughing.

"He's coming a little too fast for me now; look where the antelope's horn has dug a hole in his pony's flank," cried Tom, pulling the beautiful head of the animal around, which calamity being seen by the Indian put him in a frenzy. He jumped off and untying the carcass let it fall to the ground. He then took a couple of turns around the antelope's head with his lariat, and, tying it to the pommel of his saddle, dug his moccasined heels into the flanks of his kiyus, and galloped off over the prairie dragging his game on the ground as if it were a bundle of old rags. The condition of the meat on reaching the cook's tent need

not be described. There was no hair left on the carcass, and the meat looked blue through the skin. When the boys reached camp they found everybody in a fever of excitement. All were getting out their rifles and buckling on their cartridge belts.

CHAPTER VII.

"I WONDER what's the matter," said Tom.

"I don't know; the cavalry are all drawn up in line over there," replied Joe, as they came into camp.

"Hello, Pat, what's the matter?"

"Faith, an' they soi there's a million rid divils, comin' ter take the scalps av us, but, begorrah, Oi'll scald ivery muther's son av them afore they git moin."

"Injuns on the warpath, boys; this beastly government's going to catch it now, ye know, not a man left to tell the bloody tale. You've abused the poor redman until he is going to turn!" roared Hugill, dancing about on his long legs, and whirling his carbine around his head.

"What is it, Mr. Hugill? What is it all about? Are there really any hostile Indians coming?" asked Tom, not looking quite so

belligerent as when he had talked of taking scalps a few days before.

"Hostile Indians? The cavalrymen say the prairie is black with them, ye know; they estimate that there are not less than a thousand of them. We are to have a little fun and no mistake, ye know."

"Whereabouts are they all?"

"About three miles from here."

"Do they know we are here?"

"Well, I should say, so; ye know there was a company sent out this morning to reconnoiter, and after a while they ran into a camp of a couple of hundred lodges!"

"Did they have any fight with them?"

"No! The bloody cowards turned and scampered back home, ye know!"

"It's lucky they had sense enough not to shoot at them; they may prove to be peaceable Indians," said Tom, hoping sincerely that they would.

"We'll soon find out; they have sent the scouts out to have a look at them. The poor brutes are awfully frightened; they are

afraid they may be some of the Sioux that Custer has run out of the Black Hills, ye know."

"I hope they are not; they may be River Crows."

"Oh, no fear of that; they will turn out to be Sioux, ye know," said Hugill, and here the attention of all was directed to the scouts riding back as fast as their ponies could carry them.

"Sioux! Sioux! Sioux!" they yelled, as they came dashing through the line of cavalry.

This added to the general excitement, and the scouts had hardly had time to make their reports, when Indians were seen coming up from all directions, but as soon as they came within half a mile, they stopped and appeared to take counsel among themselves.

"There's an awful lot of them," said Joe, looking at them through Tom's field glass.

"Yes, but I don't think there's any danger, do you?" asked Tom.

"No, we're enough for them."

"I wonder what that fellow means riding around in a circle that way."

"I don't know; there goes my father; let's go over and ask him if he thinks there's going to be a fight."

"All right, if we can get with him we'll have a chance to find out all about it," assented Joe, as he followed after Tom to overtake Major Troxwell.

"Hello, boys, you're not frightened, I hope?"

"No, sir, not at all, but then—you see—we wanted to know—if there was any danger," said Tom, and although he was possessed of as much courage as is found in most boys, yet he could not suppress a slight quaver in his voice. Joe did not say anything, but there was an ugly frown upon his face and a look of determination about him that portended no good to the Indian that molested him.

"Well, there's no danger at all, boys; we've sent a scout back after some of the infantry to come in wagons, and we've cavalry enough here to hold this mob at bay for awhile."

"What is that Indian riding around in a circle for?"

"I don't know; you boys come over with me to where those officers are, and we'll find out," replied the major, and when they had joined these the major said to the half-breed interpreter:

"Well, Marcello what does that fellow mean riding around in a circle so many times?"

"He means that some of them want to come and have a big talk with us," answered the half-breed, grinning.

"Oh, that's it, and here the deputation comes," said the major, as he held his field glass to his eyes.

The cavalry were drawn up in regular line of battle and the civilians were told to keep inside the circle of wagons under which had

been piled all the harness, chains and commissary supplies as fortifications. About ten or a dozen Indians came riding up, gaudy in their gay trappings, red paint, and flying feathers. There was a general chorus of "How! How! How!" and then they had to shake hands with the officers.

They were making pantomimic gestures of friendship, but every one of those tall, grand warriors, representatives of that fast-fading race, had an expression of undying hatred plainly discernible on his face. They shook hands with all, including Tom and Joe. This performance was about concluded when the very last Indian, a great, gaunt, ugly specimen, shook Tom's hand, and took umbrage at the fact that he had a glove on. He grasped Tom's hand and pulled the glove off, spat upon it, threw it on the ground, and ground his heel down upon it, saying:

"Tush, wa-seeche washita."

Poor Tom was thunderstruck, and knew not what to do or say, but a voice from

behind saying, "Good enough for you, you young fool, he'll teach you manners," told Tom that Hugill had been a witness to his mortification, and on looking around he saw that ubiquitous individual perched on the top bows of a canvas-covered wagon, his long legs dangling down below and his luxuriant side whiskers floating in the breeze. The Indians commenced a general chattering among themselves, casting covert glances at Hugill; then a tall Indian stepped out and made a speech which the interpreter Marcello quoted as follows:

"The whites are not going to oppress us further. The great long-haired white brave has burnt the prairies of the Black Hills. The poor redman has come a long way to find some buffalo, to put away for the next snow—"

Here he was interrupted by Hugill who shouted from his perch of vantage:

"Louder! We cawn't hear, ye know!"

"Mr. Hugill, please don't interrupt again," said Major Troxwell, and again the

Indian spoke in his own language, being interrupted by Marcello:

"We are not going to allow you to pass. I am Lone Wolf, chief of the Yanktöne Sioux, and I have said it. You cannot pass. We know that our great-grandmother across the water, and our great-grandfather in Washington have put their heads together, and are going to lay an iron trail along here to carry off our buffalo, and we are not going to let you pass; you whites are all dogs, and sons of dogs. Lone Wolf has spoken."

There were many gutteral grunts of satisfaction among the chiefs after these words, but Hugill again attracted the attention of all by shouting from his wagon top:

"Who are you calling a dog? You're a cad, and if you will step out with me I'll punch your bloody head, blawst your beastly eyes!"

"Come! Come! Hugill if you cannot refrain from interfering, you had best come down," said Major Troxwell, angrily.

This chief was followed by speeches from the others to the same purport, each taking particular pains to state that he was a big brave, great chief, and a wonderful fellow altogether. The cavalry officers and Major Troxwell talked the situation over, and they concluded that, as Major Troxwell was chief in command, it were better that he should address them and explain their intentions in a manner to suit the occasion, and appease their minds on the railroad question. The major, stepping out into the open circle, said:

“Come, Marcello, you must try to do me justice. Tell them—”

Here he was interrupted by several of the Indians stepping forward and pointing up toward Hugill. They all spoke together and excitedly. It was apparent to all it was about Hugill they were talking, but what they said, of course, was not understood, until Marcello said:

“They say they want the big chief with the two scalps on his face to speak first.”



This of course caused every one to roar with laughter, and it took considerable explanation on Marcello's part to convince the Indians that Hugill was not a big chief at all.

"Tell them that I consider them all our friends and brothers."

"Please leave me out of that category, major, if you will, as notwithstanding the great esteem in which I hold any friends of yours, I could not, in honor to my feelings, ye know," said Hugill, but he was interrupted by the major, who said in a voice of thunder:

"This is the last time, Mr. Hugill. You may consider yourself under arrest. Get down from that wagon and go to your tent!" and Hugill climbed down, muttering imprecations upon Yankee officers imposing upon English gentlemen, while the major continued:

"Yes, they are our brothers, and their great-grandfather in Washington thinks so much of them that he has compelled their

great-grandmother across the big water to come here, and mark a line so that the Indians belonging beyond the line cannot come below it and kill their buffalo. We are here to mark this line with mounds of rock, and when we have done this we go home, and no iron shall be laid down here."

This was received with grunts of approval and one immense chief who had several scalps dangling at his belt came forth from the group of silent braves, and with his knife commenced drawing something on the dusty ground.

"Look at those scalps he's got there, Tom," whispered Joe, whose blood boiled at the sight.

"Yes, and one of them looks like the hair of a woman," said Tom, in an undertone.

"What is that fellow doing?"

"I don't know. It looks as if he were drawing a map; no, it is the American flag; he is drawing another, wait a minute—yes—that is the British flag, now."



"That's what they are, and well drawn too ; the fellow is quite an artist. What's he doing now?" asked Joe, who hardly understood the sentiment intended to be expressed by the Indian, for he stooped down and pretended to pick up the American flag and then waved the imaginary banner over his head.

"Three cheers!" shouted a sergeant, who stood holding his horse between the chief actors in this scene and his company.

"Hip! Hurrah! Hurrah! Hurrah!" rang out hundreds of voices, and the gratified Indian then jumped upon the British emblem and obliterated it in the dust.

"Major Troxwell, if you will let me punch that villain's beastly head you may put me in irons," said Hugill, having again come to the front, forgetful of the major's orders.

"Mr. Hugill, you are not here to uphold the English principles and you must stay in your tent! Remember, you are under arrest!" said the major, sternly.

"Under arrest! I'm an example of the fact that worth is seldom recognized and virtue rarely rewarded. Under arrest! It's a beastly shame, ye know! Great Cæsar's ghost! What would my aunt, the Lady Frances Hugill, say now?" growled Hugill, as he slowly went back to his tent.

This exhibition of loyalty and good will on the part of the Indians was followed by more speeches from their chiefs given in the most grandiloquent styles and it was uncertain whether the major was not about to invite the chiefs to dine with him, when at this point in the conference fifty or more Indians came galloping from the main body to within long rifle range of them and there set up a yelling that sounded much like the chorus of a pack of hungry coyotes.

"What's the matter with those fellows, I'd like to know?" asked Tom.

"They are getting impatient, and want to find out what's going on," answered Joe, laughing. Then to the surprise of all, the dusky commissioners sprang upon their

kiyuses and took the most unceremonious leave imaginable. Away they rode thumping the flanks of their ponies with their heels, and pounding them over the backs with their quirts; away like the wind, a cloud of blinding dust thrown up behind them, almost obscuring them from view.

All the time that they had been participating in this conference no one had seen any signs of weapons about the Indians, as they had been closely wrapped in their blankets, but when they went flying off in such a mad haste they threw their blankets to one side waving them in the air with one hand while in the other each was seen to carry his rifle.

"What in the world made them skip like that?" asked Tom.

"It must have been from something those other fellows were yelling," replied Joe.

"There they all go off together to join that big crowd."

"What a lot of them there are! I'd hate to be caught out by that gang."

"I think I'll have my hair cut close to my head."

"That would be a good idea. What's all that yelling from them now?"

"They thought that perhaps the cavalry might give them a volley and a chase, and then they would have turned and had a reserve fire," remarked an old frontiersman belonging to the major's party.

"But they know too much for that. Look! They are dividing up into small squads and are coming about us in all directions," cried Joe, pointing to the west.

Such was indeed the case, and it became a serious question, if these Indians were to make any determined attack, whether the small party with its escort of cavalry would be able to cope with them. The wagons had been changed from their first position to help as a defense from stray bullets, being now in a circle about the tents.

There was no mistaking the hostile intentions of the Indians now, for one small squad, a little more bold than the rest, had

ridden within long rifle range and given the camp a volley. This was not effective and again they came nearer, riding round and round the camp; but as yet the cavalry had made no demonstration. The Indians were now scattered about singly in all directions, riding still nearer to show their bravery and contempt for the whites, but they took good care to keep their persons on the far side of their ponies.

All this maneuvering had been silently witnessed by the whites, but as yet they had not fired a shot. A great waste of endeavor on the part of the Indians and what would they do next? Orders had been given to all not to fire, and Joe and Tom were panting under this restraint.

"I think I shall know that villain that pulled off my glove, and I'm going to do my best to teach him a lesson, this time," muttered Tom, who had not ceased chafing from the insult.

"What are they going to do now? See! See! Here they come in regular line of bat-

tle!" exclaimed Joe, and so they did, but it was not in an Indian's nature to make any fair and bold charge upon an enemy. It was plain to all that they were up to some mischief.

"The cavalry are getting ready. They are going to make a charge on those fellows," cried Tom, as an officer was seen to give some orders.

"That's Major Reno, over there, he's in command of all, and I'm glad he's here himself; they say he's a great Indian fighter!"

And now a bugle sounded and the cavalry-men all in the same instant swung themselves into the saddle.

"I hope they will not be drawn into a trap."

"No fear. Reno has seen lots of service. They say he rose from the ranks, and if that's so he must know what he's about."

"That looks like smoke, or is it only dust beyond the Indians there?" said Tom.

What the boys had just discovered had been already observed by the eagle eye of

Reno. Another note from the bugle and away dashed the cavalry. Away and together, on horses trained to jump at the bugle's blast! What a gallant sight! An even line of bluecoats over the shining backs of well fed and fiery steeds, tearing up and scattering the sod and dust with their heels as they flew straight at the mass of the enemy. The wind was blowing direct from the Indians to the camp, and the red fiends had fired the long grass beyond where they had been enmassed, so that it would get good headway before it would be noticed.

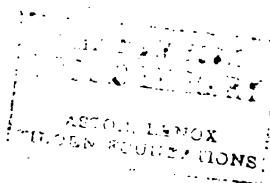
On dashed the cavalry, faster and faster. Reno was determined, if possible, to give them a bit of punishment where they stood and put out the fire at the same time. But the Indians did not relish any such idea, and without waiting for the cavalry to get within decent range, they fired a scattering volley and then fled in all directions. The fire was put out without trouble and the cavalry were resting to allow their horses to regain their wind.

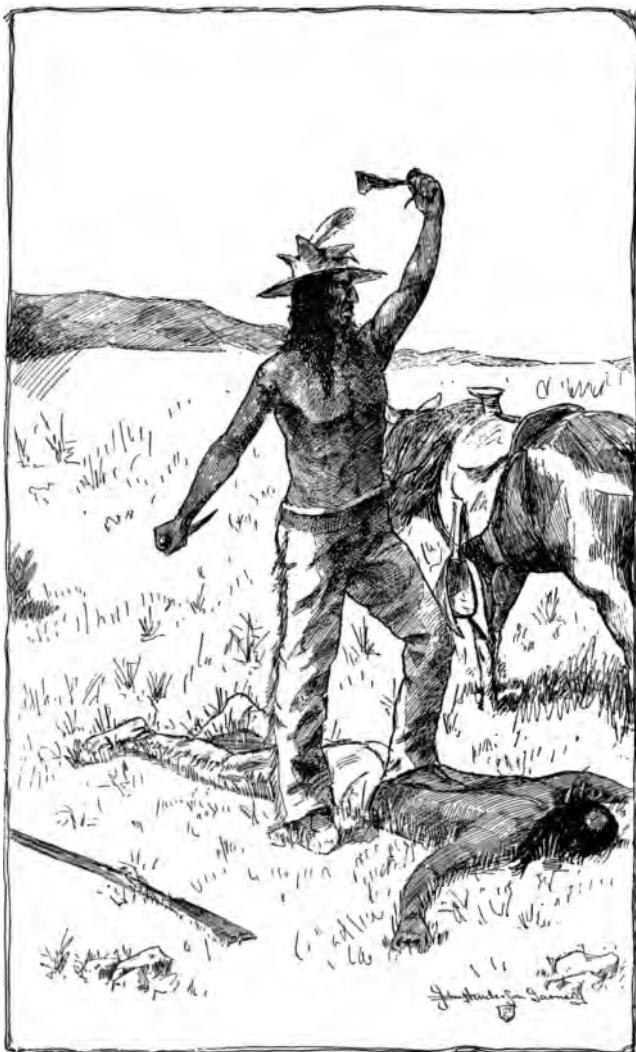
Reno did not care to pursue with his handful of men as he had the welfare of the camp in his charge. As yet the cavalry had not discharged a carbine.

All had been watching the charge of the cavalry, and the rear of the camp had been forgotten until a rattling discharge of firearms and the whistling of bullets from that quarter called them to turn their heads. The mules had been corraled between the circle of wagons, and were now greatly terrified as several had been struck by this volley.

“This way!” shouted the major, but before he had called, the single report of a rifle rang out from one of the wagons in the rear.

“I’ve hit one! I’ve hit one of ‘em! Look quick! I’ve downed his horse too!” shouted Joe, for it was he, who of all the crowd had taken the thought of an attack in the rear into his head. Joe had climbed up into a wagon, and was just in time to see about twenty of the Indians make a dash from





THE SCOUT HAD SCALPED THE DEAD INDIAN.—Page 130.

the banks of a sheltering coulee and give the camp a volley from pretty close quarters. It was too close as it proved for one of them, for as they were remounting their ponies after shooting from the ground for a better aim, Joe's bullet had done its deadly work. It struck the Indian fairly in the back, going through him and striking his pony in the neck, killing it also. The two fell in a heap, the pony pinning the dead Indian to the ground. The nearest Indians made frantic efforts to pull their dead comrade from under the pony, but as now all hands from the camp were pouring a galling fire upon them they fled, leaving the dead Indian behind! Whether any more were hit they could not tell, but one certainly lay there, a silent witness to the evil-minded and treacherous nature of the Indian.

The cavalry, hearing the shooting, came dashing back to the camp. The Indian scout Chonka-ta-ketchah-ha had mounted his pony and now rode out to the dead Indian. He was seen to dismount and bend

over the body. The gleam of a sharp knife, a hard pull and he waved something in the air. Horrors! Tom and Joe both shuddered. The scout had scalped the dead Indian! It was one thing to read and hear about such things but to actually see this horrible deed performed made their blood boil, although it was on one of the enemy. It was more than they cared to talk about. The killing of a dozen Indians would not have bothered them half so much.

Major Reno came over to where Tom was talking to his father, and said:

"Well, Troxwell, your men have laid one out; that's a good beginning."

"Yes, but how's this thing going to end? There are several hundred of those Indians," answered Major Troxwell.

"One of my scouts went for the infantry before those fellows came up, as I thought we might have some trouble. But look, I think the whole mass is leaving us for good now," returned Reno, and, sure

enough, they appeared to be making off as fast as they could.

"Let's get up where we can see everything," cried Tom, and the boys climbed on top of a wagon to get a better view.

"It's our infantry coming in the wagons, and that's what has scared those Indians."

"They most likely thought it was time they were leaving."

"They must have thought Custer was after them again."

The teams came dashing in, covered with foam from hard driving, but it was a case in which it was hard to tell of what importance a few minutes might be. An extra guard was placed that night, and the scouts watched the country well for the next few days, reporting that their troublesome neighbors had all gone south in the direction of the Bear Paw mountains.

CHAPTER VIII.

SHORTLY after this little trouble with the Indians Dr. Goon remarked :

“Mr. Hugill, you and the boys may get our traps together and we will investigate the surroundings of our new camp.”

“Good!” exclaimed Joe, “and I vote we go toward that glittering hill over there; my curiosity has kept me thinking about it all the morning.”

This new camp had been reached the evening before, and was on the bank of a small sluggish stream called, by way of courtesy, or by the exaggerated appreciation of anything like moving water in a prairie country, “Poplar River.” Why poplar, except from the absence of that tree as well as of all others, the boys could not tell. There may have been such trees nearer its influx into the Great Muddy, but up here at

its head there was neither bush nor shrub. Before them a level, rolling prairie stretched as far as the eye could reach, conveying the same impression of vastness as does the old ocean when one stands on its beach. The glittering hill, of which Joe spoke, was the only break in the dull, and uninviting surroundings. This was a slight elevation above the level horizon, and glittered and scintillated in the morning sun like the piles of scraps and waste back of a tinshop. The doctor and Hugill walked in front of the lads, who were watching for anything that might be of interest. While it seemed much nearer, the hill proved to be at least five miles distant before they reached it, so deceptive is the clear atmosphere of the prairies.

“Here’s something!” shouted Joe, and he and Tom bent their heads over a small but very curious creature that Joe had espied sunning itself on a stone.

“What in the world can it be? Don’t touch it!” cried Tom.

"I'm not going to, but I want to get him in my box before it crawls down some hole," replied Joe.

"Why, it's a horned toad," exclaimed Hugill, who had turned back to see what they had found, while the doctor strolled on to examine the cause of the glittering appearance of the hill just beyond them.

"A horned toad!"

"Yes, nothing but a horned toad, and I don't think the doctor will want it."

"I'll take him along and see," said Joe, when a shout from the doctor attracted their attention. That gentleman was seen to be dancing about and fanning himself in the most vigorous manner with his hat.

"What's the matter with the old chap now? 'Pon me soul, I believe he's struck a wasp's nest," declared Hugill.

"It looks that way," chimed in Tom.

"Why doesn't he run from them, then?" asked Joe, as they hurried on to where the doctor stood like one bewildered, fanning

himself as if his life depended on it, his hat in one hand and his wig in the other.

"Ha! Ha! Ha!" roared Hugill, "why don't you leg it? Skip! Run! Go it for all you're worth, doctor!"

"What's the matter, sir, hornets or a wasp's nest?" asked Tom, but now that they had reached the spot where the doctor stood they saw no signs of these insects.

The old gentleman looked somewhat dazed and very pale as he gasped:

"Ugh! Ach! I can hardly breathe yet. Ugh! I'm suffocating! Don't you see it? Kill him, Joe! you've got the gun, kill him!"

"Kill what, sir?" asked Joe, wondering if the doctor had gone crazy or was suffering a sunstroke, as it was now intensely hot.

"Kill that reptile! It is a blow snake!* He's just over there, and I stepped right over him. Oh, how sick I feel! I could hardly see a minute ago. I was suffocating, and it seemed impossible to get any air. That's what I was fanning myself for. He's just beyond you, Joe."

*This incident and peculiarity of the snake are facts.

"Yes, I see him!" exclaimed Joe, as he raised his gun.

"Hold on! Don't spoil him!" cried the doctor, but he spoke too late.

Bang! went Joe's rifle, and the bullet, striking the snake about a foot from his head, fairly cut him in two pieces.

"I'm afraid I've spoiled him," said Joe, as the writhing creature twisted its tail in all directions.

"Never mind, we must have him; we lose an inch or two here, but you can make it up in feet when you tell this story in the future," replied the doctor, recovering.

"Snake stories are always barred," remarked Hugill.

"Gracious! I shall not get over the shock of this for some time. I was walking along rather fast when right at my feet I saw him coiled, a great, yawning red mouth extended up toward me. I heard a hissing sound as I sprang over him, and the air all about me seemed permeated with a sweet, overpowering, suffocating odor. It took

my breath away and I thought I should fall. It was awful!" shuddered the doctor, making a grimace at the remembrance.

"I've heard of blow snakes, but never thought they existed," remarked Tom, as he helped to dump the loathsome creature into a tin box they carried for such purposes, and then all trudged on to the hill.

This slight elevation from the surrounding prairies was formed of earth that was loose as ashes and of a brownish red color, a formation like the bad lands. Strewn about through this were pieces of mica from an inch cube to slabs as large as a man's hand, and an inch thick, and this was what had glittered so in the sun. Specimens of this were taken and then they returned to camp, where the rest of the day was spent in putting away the results of the day's labor.

Thus the days flew by. Their life was like one prolonged holiday, Joe would often remark, and the time passed so quickly that two months had elapsed before the boys

realized it, and mid-summer found them camped in the Bad Lands.

"I say, Joe, don't you think we could kill a buffalo just as well as those soldiers did the other day without being on horseback?" asked Tom, as he pressed a bunch of flowers into position for the herbarium.

"I think so. What kind of a shrub is that you've got there?" replied Joe.

"Dr. Goon said it had campaniform flowers, and belonged to the genus hyacinthus, but it was something he had never seen before and would have to look it up. What do you say if we have a try at one to-day?"

"All right; you are breaking off too many of those flowers."

"There are too many on this branch. Now these things are all done let's go and tell the doctor where we are going, and be off," said Tom, putting the big book away, and soon the boys were hurrying toward some high bluffs, where buffaloes were generally to be found, as they appeared to dislike

the loose, ashen soil composing what is generally termed "bad lands". It might have been that the rough formation of immense mounds of earth, suggesting hidden terrors, caused them to avoid such places.

"We'll go up on that butte and then we can get a good view of the prairie for miles around," suggested Tom.

"A good idea, but that is no small climb; that butte will surprise us by its height."

"It's not over five hundred feet."

"That's enough on such a hot day; you will think so before we get there," and so they did, as Joe had predicted.

"What a grand view! It is well worth the climb! My! Just look at the buffaloes! There are squads of them as far as the eye can reach!"

"This is the butte that the doctor and Hugill climbed the other day; they said we could see the Sweet Grass Hills, and those little blue ridges to the west must be they."

"They are nearly one hundred miles from

here; that shows how clear the air must be, or we could not see so far."

"They are a long way off. Oh! what herds of buffalo! Joe, there's one bunch not a great distance from here, all around the head of that coulee there. We can go back the way we climbed up and then go around the end of this butte and up the coulee until we are right into them! What do you say?"

"Just the thing; we'll never get a better chance," and the boys lost no time in retracing their steps.

It was much easier than climbing up, and they never stopped for the need of a breathing spell until they reached the bottom.

"Now, Joe, you are certain, are you, that the coulee the buffaloes were in, is the same one that opens out at the end of the butte?"

"I am positive of it, for I followed it down with my eyes to make sure, so that when we reached it we could keep in the bottom,

and not have to show ourselves until we reached its head."

"That's what I was thinking, and when we get in the coulee we must keep as quiet as we can, and not talk; we want to keep down in it until we get as far as we can without being seen."

"Yes, but we want to pick out some fat young cows, for the bulls are too tough."

"It's all tough enough except the humps, but all we want are the tongues."

The boys had now reached the coulee and had turned into it, proceeding without speaking a word. This shallow depression in the prairie grew narrower as they followed its winding course, and finally they had to crouch down as they went forward. Its depth had been growing correspondingly less, until they were obliged to crawl along on their hands and knees, as they wished to get as close to the herd as possible before they exposed themselves to shoot. It was slow work, and the restrained excitement was telling on their nerves. The boys

had had so much practice with their rifles that they were excellent shots by this time.

"We must be close enough now," ventured Tom.

"All right," replied Joe, and the boys arose to their feet, their rifles ready cocked in their hands, prepared for any emergency. As they reached their feet they were in hopes of being within rifle range of the nearest of



WHAT WAS THEIR ASTONISHMENT TO FIND THEMSELVES WITHIN TWENTY YARDS OF THE NEAREST ONE.

the straggling herd, but what was their astonishment to find themselves within twenty yards of the nearest one, while in front, on each side, and behind them were dozens of these monstrous brutes, feeding innocently, unconscious of the danger in their midst. The boys had exceeded their

intentions and were actually in the very center of the herd. The two nearest animals were lying down. Two old bulls! They were quietly chewing the cud of liberty and independence, and were not more than twenty yards from the boys. The ungainly brutes were on their feet in an instant, and sounded a loud sniff of warning which caused every animal to turn his head, and soon scores joined in this manifestation of their sense of danger. Tom threw his rifle to his shoulder and took aim at the great ungainly brute, which looked more weird than ever from the naked appearance of its back and hind quarters.

"That's an old bull! Don't shoot!" exclaimed Joe, singling out a young cow. Two rifles rang out with loud report, and the cow fell mortally wounded, but the bull stood pawing the dirt and throwing dust in clouds over his back. Tom had taken aim at the center of the bull's forehead, and quite likely hit his mark fairly, but the mass of hardened alkali mud entangled in his

great locks of hair made an additional protection to his almost impenetrable skull. The frightened animals came running up from all directions and again two rifle shots rang out. This scattered the approaching buffaloes, and set the entire herd in motion, with the boys standing in their midst. On the frightened animals came threateningly near, and now the boys shot at the oncoming brutes with the intention of breaking their ranks, for who could tell what was to be the end of this sport should the buffaloes come *en masse*?

"Run with the herd, Tom, run with the herd!" shouted Joe, who was standing a little nearer the approaching buffaloes than Tom, and away the boys went in the center of an open space kept clear by their constant shooting. It was a cannonading of their rifles, a thundering of the buffaloes' hoofs and a stifling cloud of dust.

Buffalo in front of them, on each side of them, and coming from the rear! Joe was a

trifle behind Tom, when to his horror, he saw through the dust an old bull leave the ranks and make a maddened charge from behind upon Tom, who was wholly unconscious of his approaching danger.

CHAPTER IX.

THE sight of that infuriated bull, bleeding from a ghastly gun shot wound, and about to toss his companion, all but froze the blood in Joe's veins, and had the deafening thunders of a thousand hoofs allowed of Tom's hearing a warning word, Joe's throat would have been unable to utter it. His tongue had momentarily lost its power, but his brain was quick to suggest, his arm to respond. His rifle was thrown to his shoulder and with an instantaneous but certain aim at a mortal spot, he pulled the trigger. "Click" sounded the hammer, striking steel. There was no report, no discharge from Joe's rifle. In his excitement he had forgotten to reload it! At the very moment that the bull was on the unsuspecting Tom, the latter stopped for a second and discharged his rifle at one of the lum-

bering animals on the right. The proximity of the explosion to the ear of the belligerent bull, frightened him more than a bullet from Joe's rifle would have done, for he turned of his own accord and swerved by Tom so closely that he could have touched the frightened animal with his hand had he been so inclined, and if Joe had planted a bullet in the brute's heart the force of his unimpeded momentum would have crushed Tom in the downfall. When Joe's rifle failed to respond the poor fellow closed his eyes for the moment to shut out the sight of the seemingly inevitable result. What was his surprise and delight a moment later to behold his comrade yet upon his feet and the last of the buffaloes beyond them. They stood alone, holding the heated barrels of their rifles in their hands, their hearts beating at a lively rate from their violent running and not a dead buffalo in sight. Joe ran up to Tom with tears in his eyes, saying:

"Well, old fellow, that last one gave you an awful close call!"

"Did n't he, though? I might have touched him, and I never saw him until after I had shot at a cow on the other side of me."

"I never was so frightened in my life. I tried to shoot him but I had forgotten to reload; and then I shut my eyes. I never expected to see you alive again, old boy. Oh, I'm awfully glad you didn't get hurt."

"So am I, for that matter, but it's a pity we did n't hurt more of them after all the shooting we've done. I shot away nearly all of my cartridges," said Tom, feeling around to the back of his belt, "only seven or eight left!"

"And no wonder my rifle did not go off. I couldn't have loaded if I'd wanted to; mine are all gone."

"But where is all our game? I can't say positively that I saw a single one fall, but I saw plenty of them bleeding from wounds."

"Your bullets hit too far back; they have

an awful tough anatomy and can carry lots of lead before they die; but I know of three or four falling that will not get far."

"Are you sure? It would be too bad to get nothing after all that shooting; we must have run two miles or more."

"I don't doubt it; that's one for a certainty over there," exclaimed Joe, pointing to a dark object on the prairie.

"Yes, that's one, and I think there is another just beyond," added Tom, as they hurried along back to where they found lying dead their first buffalo. Approaching this great monarch of the plains, they were both filled with awe and reverence for the noble brute so ruthlessly slain, for this great animal that would soon belong to the past.

"It does seem a pity now that we've killed him, that so much meat is to be wasted," said Joe.

"We might as well kill a few as to let the Indians have them all."

"They use them and waste nothing, and kill no more than they want."

"Well, we can't carry more than his tongue and the next thing is to get that out. What a monstrous brute he is!" exclaimed Tom, taking hold of one of the animal's short, black horns and trying in vain to move his head.

"He's a big fellow and no mistake," replied Joe, looking at him admiringly.

"He looks like an elephant, and his hide is as thick as an elephant's," commented Tom, having thrust his knife into the animal's mouth and trying to cut the hide back toward its jaw, while pulling at the brute's tongue with the other hand.

"Ha! Ha! Ha! That's a fine way to take a tongue out! It's plain to see that you never butchered any," cried Joe.

"Well, how else would you do it?"

"Not that way!"

"Well, how? This fellow seems to have awful teeth; if it were not for those ivories I could manage," said Tom, having only succeeded in getting the animal's tongue half out.

"Come, let me take the knife; you must slash under the throat from near the muzzle to the windpipe, and through this long slit you must pull the tongue down, then you can cut it off, so, getting its full length," and Joe most dexterously removed the tongue and held it up proudly to Tom's view.

"Number one! Cut a little hole in the tip end of it and I can carry it on one finger."

After hunting the trail thoroughly back to where they had started to shoot they found only three more, and one of these was the young cow that Joe had killed at the first shot when they came into the herd.

"We did an awful lot of shooting to get only four," said Tom.

"Yes, but I am afraid that we have wounded a great many that will eventually die," replied Joe, as he finished taking out the last tongue.

"I can carry these tongues if you will cut out a piece of the hump, Joe. Do try; the hump that the scout brought in the other day was fine."

"I can get all we can carry very easily if you say so. It will seem less wasteful to take all we can," and this choice morsel was soon added to their plunder.

Shouldering their rifles the boys tramped back to camp, delighted with the result of their exploits. After depositing the spoils of the chase with the cook they gave most glowing accounts of their hunt to the others.

"You young fellows would better have been here at work, ye know, than hunting like bloody Indians. There's a lot of packing to be done this afternoon. We've orders to move camp to-morrow, ye know," piped Hugill.

"No, we didn't know it; why did you not tell us before we left?"

"Just heard it myself, half an hour ago, ye know."

"I'm glad of it. Three cheers for leaving this dusty hole!" shouted Tom gleefully.

"I don't think any body will be sorry to leave. What do you say, old Wolf Voice,

glad to go?" asked Joe, of the scout, who stood beside a large compass that was on its tripod in front of the tent. The scout was much amused at the way the needle followed his hunting knife as he moved it about over the top of the glass, but he made no reply and Joe repeated his question.

"Glad to go, Wolf Voice?"

"No," grunted that member of Uncle Sam's defenders, for Wolf Voice was a regularly enlisted scout.

"Do n't want to move, eh?"

"No," was again his laconic reply.

"Well, what makes you like to stay here?"

"Good water — heap meat, — good," grunted Wolf Voice, still giving his attention to the compass.

"More good water, more heap meat," asserted Joe, hoping that his predictions would prove true, but the stoical Indian simply shrugged his shoulders, and no further remarks could be elicited from him.

The preliminary packing was done in an

hour, notwithstanding Hugill's allusions to its immensity, and then Tom remarked:

"Well, Joe, I'm sorry to leave Abe and Ben."

"So am I. How I wish we could take them along with us, but Dr. Goon says he can't be bothered with them."

"It seems too bad to be obliged to leave them."

"Yes, it is."

"Let's go up and see them, and say good-bye to the lads for the last time."

"And I'll take a part of that hump along."

"All right, you get the meat and I'll get the poles," assented Tom, going around to the back of the tent where he found a couple of surveyor's rods; these were tall, slim poles and painted red and white.

The poles the boys used first to assist them in climbing, and then as weapons of defense, for although Abe and Ben were always very glad to see them, yet their feathered parents always resented their vis-

its as unwarranted intrusions, and took particular pains to show their dislike with force of wings and claws, dashing through the air in dangerous proximity to the boys, faces. In the apex of a pyramid of loose alkali-ashy earth was the nest containing



IN THE APEX OF A PYRAMID, * * * * WAS THE NEST
CONTAINING ABE AND BEN.

Abe and Ben, which were half grown young eagles and great favorites of the boys. It was an arduous climb to reach the nest, as that soft pile of peculiar earth was many hundreds of feet high and one's feet would sink into it several inches.

"There are the old birds now," cried Tom, as he stopped for breath and leaned on his

pole, which sank to a considerable depth in the ashy earth.

"Where?" asked Joe.

"Over that way, to the right of the sun. Can't you see them sailing around? They are so near the sun it almost blinds me to look at them."

"Oh, yes, I see them now. How high up they are! I can just see them now, and that's all."

"I don't think they have seen us yet."

"What old fools they are! I should think they would understand by this time that we don't want to hurt them."

"They have no more sense than a goose."

"They are coming this way now; they are going to give us one parting battle."

"Well, let's hurry up to the top and then we can have more fun with them," and Tom twisted his pole around to get it out of the soft earth, and once more they climbed upward, losing half as much ground as they gained at every step.

When they reached the summit they enjoyed seeing the young eagles eat the meat, bit by bit. The old ones soared above them at a respectable distance either fearing to again attack them or else having come to an understanding of their motives. This was their last visit to the eagle's nest, and it is safe to say that the eagles remembered the boys for many a day, as no more tender morsels ever went down the throats of the incipient emblems of this great nation than were fed to these.

CHAPTER X.

THE sun was doing its utmost to show its power, and although the timid prairie dog sought a refuge in its cool underground retreat yet the stranger within its gates writhed its shining coils and reveled in the heat.

"There's another," shouted Tom, stretching his neck out of the rear end of one of the wagons as they slowly toiled along over the prairie.

It was a large rattlesnake coiled up near a prairie dog's hole, and Joe, trudging along on foot, had in his hand the mule driver's whip, with which he had been trying to hit an unwary prairie dog.

"He is going down the hole," replied Joe, and without a moment's thought he rushed to the fast disappearing reptile and with all a boy's recklessness grasped it by the

end of the tail, but dropped it in almost the same instant, and with a blanched face eagerly examined his hand.

"Did he bite yer?" asked the driver, jumping off from his saddle mule without stopping his team, and running over to where Joe stood.

"No, I think not, but as I was pulling on his tail his head flew out, and he snapped at my hand, coming close enough to scare me pretty badly."

"That'll teach yer not ter meddle with them pesky things, fur they can turn in a pretty small hole," was the driver's answer, running back to his team and remounting his mule.

It is just such little incidents that make up the daily life of a trip across the plains, where nearly every hour produces something of interest to an observant mind. It was a three days' steady journey to the Sweet Grass Hills, making nightly camps with the poorest of water for man and beast, as the scout had predicted.

"To-morrow night we shall be in the hills," commented Tom.

"Yes, and won't we enjoy a good drink once more! They say there is the best of water there."

"This stuff is awful! I can't drink it at all; we'll have to get along with tea again."

"One must be actually deprived of good water to appreciate the blessing."

"Pat said last night it was full of red bugs, even after he had strained it through muslin."

"He ought to have given the bugs to the doctor," said Joe, laughing.

"I believe the doctor would have wanted them had he known it."

"We've put away some pretty small ones already."

"What do you suppose they do with all these things we are picking up?"

"Put them on exhibition in that big building they call the Smithsonian Institute, I suppose."



Here the call for supper interrupted them, and no time was lost in responding to it, except by the Indian scout, whose name, as translated into English, the boys had long since found out to be Wolf Voice, and this gentleman's appetite was most erratic. He often ate but once a day, and at other times, when lying about camp, he was munching upon something from morning till night, and, as Pat Molloy graphically explained it, "He was fillin' his bread basket forinst hard toims." On this particular evening, as all had finished their supper and were moving back from the rough board table, Wolf Voice made his appearance, very much excited, saying:

"Bear! Bear! Bear!"

"Phat's the matter wid ye? Come in an' ate yer supper, ye omadhaun," spluttered Pat.

"Bear! Bear! Bear!" again exclaimed the Indian, pointing to the south and beyond the little swamp on which they were encamped.

"See here, my worthy heathen friend, we haven't lost any of bruin's family, ye know, and blawst me eyes if I'm going to look for any," drawled Hugill, slowly filling his pipe.

"Sch!" hissed the scout through his teeth, for although he did not understand the words, his innate keenness told him that Hugill was trifling with him, as usual.

"Where?" asked Joe, thinking that a change from their buffalo steaks might be acceptable.

"Bear! Good! Bush!" were all the English words that Wolf Voice could command which were applicable to the occasion, but his tongue finding a loose vein in his excitement sought relief in volumes of his native language, unintelligible to all.

"He has run a bear into some brush and wants help to get him out, that's what he means," suggested Tom, and the quick intelligent face of the Indian responded with a smile of satisfaction.

"That's just what I think. Let's go with him; he can go through the brush on his kiyus and we can get a shot at the bear when he runs him out," suggested Joe, buckling on his cartridge belt.

"You don't suppose it could be a grizzly, do you? I would not want to be on foot when one of those fellows comes after me."

"No danger of that, they never leave the mountains; it's probably some small black bear; they are the only kind that run over the prairies, at least that's what I've been told."

"Well, I'm going with him; what do you say, Joe?"

"Oh! I'm going, every time," replied Joe, as he ran into his tent for his hunting knife.

"You young cubs had best stay here, ye know; you'll be getting killed some day, following that copper-skinned rascal on that pinto kiyus with the crockery optics," called out Hugill, who was always making fun of the Indian's wall-eyed pony.

"Don't you worry over our mishaps," retorted Tom.

"Very well, very well; it's none of my funeral, ye know."

"Nobody is going to get hurt; you'll enjoy a bit of fat bearsteak as well as any one."

"Yes, when you catch him, ye know. Do you think that bear is going to be such a bloody fool as to run out for you chaps to kill him? Blawst me, if I ever saw such idiots."

"We'll tell you all about it when we come back."

"Faith, bhoys, an' ye'd better take a mule wid ye; if the durty baste should see ye he moight bite ye," shouted Pat, but without replying the boys hurried on after the scout, who had mounted his kiyus and was leaving camp. The grass was quite rank about the swamp, and the mules were enjoying themselves in the excessive verdure, for in their former campings in the Bad Lands feed had been scant. The three hunters followed

around the edge of the swamp and then went up a ravine about a mile.

"We'll have to lose no time for the sun will be down in an hour or so."

"That's a fact, but this must be the place. Ho! Wolf Voice! This the place?" called Tom, pointing to some brush which extended over many acres of ground, and in most places was so dense as hardly to allow anyone to go through it. The Indian nodded his head and motioned for Tom to go on one side of the brush and for Joe to station himself on the other.

"All right, I'll get behind that little point of rock, which will hide me, and if you can get the bear to follow you come toward me," replied Joe, with many gestures which the Indian understood much better than his words.

"Run him over toward me and give me a chance," said Tom. Whether he understood him or not he made no answer, but spurred his kiyus into the thickest of the scrubby brush. Up and down he rode, leaping his

kiyus over a tall patch of undergrowth, dashing through an open spot, here and there, and everywhere, yelling and whooping, pounding his nimble beast whenever the little animal failed to respond, but as yet no signs of bruin.

The boys were wild with excitement, and eagerly watched for some indications of the bear. Suddenly the Indian stopped short in his wild career, and looked intently ahead of him, his wiry little pony crouched back upon its haunches, with its neck arching, its ears thrown forward, and its dilated nostrils giving vent to snorts of terror. Wolf Voice had discovered the bear nearly hidden from sight in a mass of dead brush.

“He sees him!” shouted Joe, who was on a little higher ground than Tom.

The Indian raised his gun, and, although he knew it was impossible to make a sure shot on account of his kiyus, that had commenced dancing around in affright, yet he discharged it, hoping either to wound the brute or to frighten it out of its retreat.

"Did you hit him?" shouted Tom, but in another moment the boys both saw that, if the shot had taken effect, it had done no serious harm, for now the Indian was urging his pony on to more desperate exertions than ever, but this time to get away from the bear.

"Come this way," Joe cried out, and, as he was nearer to him than to Tom, he did so. It was an exciting run, for in the brush the bear had the advantage. Crashing over the thick bushes, blindly dashing into everything, it was soon close enough to have done the kiyus an injury had it not lost just time enough in rearing upon its hind feet, in order to strike with its fore paw, to allow the pursued to get a length ahead of it. Several times the boys thought that the bear had gotten his claws into the flanks of the noble little kiyus, that was now so thoroughly imbued with the sense of danger that it needed no encouragement to do its utmost, but each time the bear fell just short of its prey.

Wolf Voice extricated himself from the maze of the thicket and, taking advantage of a slight open spot, gained considerably on the bear. Determined to lose none of this advantage he induced the animal to follow him up the ravine, but getting nearer to the outskirts of the thicket; then making a quick turn he doubled on the infuriated brute and came dashing down past Joe, with bruin about twenty feet in the rear. Joe was a good shot, but in this exciting prelude his nerves had become strained to their utmost tension, and the difference between shooting at a mark and live game on the run, now became exemplified. His hand trembled slightly and his bullet struck just far enough back to send the bear rolling head over heels but not to kill it.

The scout had been looking behind him and had witnessed the effect of Joe's shot. Thinking that now the infuriated beast would turn and attack Joe, he wheeled his

kiyus and dashed to his side. Then sliding from his saddle as only an Indian can slide, he struck the animal a sharp blow with his quirt which sent it scampering off, trailing his long lariat.

CHAPTER XI.

WOLF VOICE threw his blanket on the ground and stood there, a lithe and almost naked savage, his rifle in one hand and his sharp knife in the other. The light and fire of many past generations of braves flashed from his dark eyes, a smile of satisfaction played about his face and a look of delighted anticipation came in gentle contrast to his usually ugly and sardonic expression.

"Shall I shoot again?" queried Joe, who had, before this, reloaded his rifle and stood determined to hold his ground. The bear lay on its side groaning and biting at its wounds, and although it was not a grizzly, yet it was one of the largest of the species known as the cinnamon, and often mistaken for the grizzly. It was a large brute, but after the exaggerated stories Joe had heard

of the size of bears, he did not appreciate the dimensions of this one.

"No!" exclaimed Wolf Voice, keeping his piercing eyes on the great ugly brute, that was yet in its blind rage totally unconscious of its enemies.

"He's getting awfully mad," said Joe, who could see no reason, as he afterward told Tom, for not pumping the lead into him right there.

"Heap bad medicine, heap bad," said Wolf Voice, his base gutterals toned down to almost sylvan chords at the prospect of the blood so soon to flow.

"Well, why not shoot now? Why not both shoot together?" continued Joe, raising his rifle to his shoulder to add significance to his words.

"No! No! No!"

"Why not?" repeated Joe, who was a little impatient, not being quite able to conquer a Nimrod's selfishness as he now saw that Tom was hurrying around the lower end of the brush.

"No! Him stand—Wolf Voice shoot."

"What do you think I'm going to do? Stand here and see you have all the fun? Him stand and me shoot, hey, old Wolf Voice?" cried Joe, tapping the stock of his rifle.

This was much for the Indian to relinquish, but there was something so brave in Joe's frank boyish face that it appealed to the savage instinct of the Indian. There was no time for further reflection, as the bear now discovered the two standing within forty yards of it and began to advance. When half of the distance was accomplished it reared upon its hind feet, looking to them nearly as large as an ox.

"Shoot!" exclaimed Wolf Voice, holding his rifle in readiness to shoot should Joe's bullet fail to find a vital spot, for lead often takes a vicarious course through these tough brutes.

"Bang!" went Joe's rifle, and as he had taken a cool and careful aim at the brute's throat the bullet went crashing through

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WOLF VOICE * * * STOOD THERE, A LITHE AND ALMOST
NAKED SAVAGE.—Page 170.

its spinal column and it fell dead in its tracks.

Tom now came running up quite out of breath, and as Wolf Voice drew his sharp knife across the animal's throat, allowing its warm heart's blood to gush over his hand bathing it in the scarlet fluid to his wrist, he gave forth a deep "Ugh," which seemed to express his entire satisfaction as to the result.

"Did you drop him, Joe?" asked Tom, panting from his run.

"Yes, it was getting so dusky that I was afraid I would miss him; it was more luck than anything else," answered Joe, looking at the huge brute with a thrill of delight.

"All your good shooting, Joe. I wish I'd had a chance at him too."

"Yours next time, Tom. He chased Wolf Voice this way and there was nothing else for him to do but to come toward me."

"Yes, I know, but I would like to have had one shot at him. What shall we do

with him? It is getting too dark to take the insides out of him now."

"What say you, Wolf Voice?"

"No good," said that gentleman, going back to where he had dropped his blanket and again wrapping it around him.

"Not good! What's the matter with it, I'd like to know?" inquired Tom, and then the Indian pretended to cut a piece out of the dead bear's flank, put the imaginary morsel into his mouth, and with mighty endeavors and ludicrous antics failed to shut his bright and wolfish teeth upon it.

"He means that the bear is too old and tough; that we could not eat it," interpreted Tom, laughing.

"He probably saw the bear run in here and could not tell whether it was a young one or not;" then turning to the Indian, Joe said: "Isn't that so, Wolf Voice?" But Wolf Voice most likely did not understand, as he made no reply but started after his kiyus which was now grazing on the hill at some little distance from them. Joe

and Tom did not wait for him but started back to camp.

The shooting of the bear was very exciting, but the boys found the subsequent recounting to breathless listeners even more so, and after they had made the others fully cognizant of every item of their adventures of the evening, it is not surprising that they had marvelous dreams of ursine monsters.

The next evening, after an arduous day's travel they encamped at the foot of the northwest group of the mountains known as the "Sweet Grass Hills." This cluster of mountains, the tallest one of which they afterward found to be thirty-five hundred feet above the level of the prairie, was almost on the forty-ninth parallel, the line running across its northern slopes. Here was a beautiful place for a camp, plenty of wood and water and good grass for the mules and horses. The doctor's party came trailing in nearly an hour behind the others, whose stock was already feeding out upon the hills in charge of the Indian

scouts. The white tents of the cavalrymen glittered in the sun, and as the doctor now had the choice of positions they went about a quarter of a mile above all the others, thus getting the first usage of the mountain brook which only too soon lost its chief attractions in the more level land below.

"Oh! How jolly to be near a mountain like this!" cried Tom, gazing joyfully at the grand heights beyond.

"Yes, indeed, and to-morrow we'll be on the top of one of those peaks, eh, Tom?"

"That's what we will. There we can load ourselves down with flora and fauna without trouble."

"Everything grows in the mountains; that's where I want to live when I grow up."

"I'd not complain of any place if I were not compelled to live on a prairie," and Tom shook his head decisively, as he rolled over a big bundle of white canvas which was soon transformed into a domicile for the delectation of the cook. After this others

soon took form to themselves, and the doctor's camp was soon again a thing of perfection.

"How do you like this water, boys?" called Dr. Goon, as he stood by the side of the rippling brook the next morning, holding a cup of the crystal fluid in his hand.

"It's delicious, sir," answered Tom.

"Nothing like good, pure water," and again the doctor gulped down great swallows of it.

"No, indeed, sir."

"It's hard to improve on nature's most excellent beverage, but just think of the stuff we've had to drink in the last three days. Bah!" and throwing the last few drops on the ground he added, "it's a wonder some of us were not made sick."

"Mighty little of it I drank, or I would have been sick," said Tom.

"It was bad, and no mistake, and now you boys would like to go up into the mountains, I know."

"Yes, sir! Yes, sir!"

"Well, you must take care of yourselves and not get hurt, and I want you to promise me to let all bears alone; you might not come off so luckily a second time."

"Oh! now, Dr. Goon, that's too bad! I do want to get a bear," returned Tom, lugubriously.

"Well, there may be some bear that wants to get you, so I want you boys to both promise me you'll not trouble any bears should you see them."

"That's pretty rough."

"You must give me your promise or I'll have to put you to some other kind of work."

"All right, sir, we'll promise."

"The Institute doesn't want them, and I don't want them. We only want those things that we have no specimens of, and every known species of bruin's family is standing about in some position in the Smithsonian Institute."

"We'll promise not to shoot at a bear if he's a mile off," laughed Joe, but it was

something of a disappointment to Tom to be thus deprived of a chance to vindicate his prowess as a hunter.

The boys were accustomed to being sent off on these rambling trips together to secure anything in the shape of new specimens, and as Hugill had no great relish for tramping over the country, and much preferred staying in camp and skinning the birds and small animals preparatory to mounting, the boys performed that part of the work that suited them best. Tom and Joe followed up the ravine on which they were encamped, for about a mile. The ascent at this point became quite steep, and here the first few trees were met.

"Isn't this a beautiful pine, Joe? Let's sit down here and rest and enjoy the view below us a few minutes," said Tom, throwing himself on the ground in the shade.

"I had no idea we were getting up so high; what a grand view we shall have from the tops of these mountains!"

"I think we shall be able to see Milk river from the top."

"Milk river! Well, I should say so! I dare say we shall be able to see the Saskatchewan, but much will depend on the clearness of the atmosphere."

"Dr. Goon said this morning that we could see the Rocky mountains from the highest of these peaks if it were clear, and they are one hundred and forty-five miles from here to where the line strikes them. What makes these cones keep dropping down? That's the second one that's hit my hat."

"I was just asking myself that same question. If we can see the Rockies from here that sight alone is worth the trip out here. Just think of seeing a great range of mountains one hundred and forty-five miles away! There's another cone!" cried Joe, looking up into the branches of the tree.

"I believe there's something up in this tree, Joe."

"Those cones don't drop right here on us of their own accord and no place else," remarked Joe, getting up and walking backward a few feet and looking up in the branches of the tree.

"That's what I think, and I believe there is something up there," replied Tom.

"And there is as sure as you live, some queer looking animal about half way up the tree, right over our heads."

"Where?"

"Stand back here near me, and you can see him."

"Yes, that's a fact! What is it? It looks like a young bear. The doctor did not say anything about cubs, eh, Joe?" and Tom raised his rifle.

"Oh! I would not shoot, Tom, you know we promised."

"But this is only a cub."

"That doesn't make any difference; the old one might be around and we might have to shoot to save ourselves if we bother the cub."

"All right, Joe, we won't break our promise, but the doctor did not say anything against taking one alive, and I'm going to get that youngster down out of there as sure as you are born."

This new phase of their instructions seemed quite reasonable, and without further discussion Joe gave Tom the use of his shoulder to assist him to reach the lower branches of the immense pine.

CHAPTER XII.

As soon as Tom had reached the first branches strong enough to hold his weight, it was much like going up a ladder for him to mount from limb to limb.

"Do n't let the little brute bite you," called Joe.

"Oh! He's too small to bite; he may scratch a little. You look out for the old one; she may come back and catch you."

"I'll look out for her."

"Oh! Joe!"

"Hello!"

"I don't think this thing is a cub after all."

"What is it?"

"Well, sir, I don't know just yet, I can't get a very good look at him from here, but I think it's a porcupine."

"You want to look out for him if it is."

"I can tell when I get up on this next limb. Yes, it is a porcupine, and he has just discovered that I am coming after him."

"Look out that he doesn't throw his quills at you."

"Oh, I don't believe that old fable! But I've got to come down again, and get some kind of a pole to shove him down with," exclaimed Tom, who climbed down again to the last large limb, which was not more than fifteen feet from the ground. Sitting on this he said:

"I say, Joe, if we get him out of the tree what are we going to do with him? I think I had better take my rifle up with me and shoot him."

"Oh, no; they are quite harmless if you don't touch them; let's try to take him back alive."

"How can we?"

"I've got a stout cord in my pocket about ten or twelve feet long; if we could get it on his neck we could drag him back to camp."



"I'll drive him down out of this tree if you will hand me that long dead limb for a pole."

"It's pretty heavy to handle and not very stout."

"Never mind, reach it up and I'll manage it."

"Now, catch the end of it."

"All right, you hold your hat when I poke him; he may fall right into it."

"Yes, I will—not," answered Joe, as Tom climbed up again, lugging his unwieldy limb after him. It was no very easy matter to disengage the bristling porcupine, as it showed but little fear, and lent all its endeavors to holding on to the limb, but finally it had to surrender to Tom's constant punching.

"Here it comes!" shouted Tom, from his lofty perch, and Joe could see the strange animal slipping and sliding down, jumping and leaping from branch to branch, and then with one long slide and a jump, its long sharp claws let go of the rough bark



and it reached the ground, there to be confronted by Joe, who with another dead branch disputed its departure.

"Don't let him get away!" cried Tom,



IT REACHED THE GROUND, THERE TO BE CONFRONTED BY JOE.

climbing down in a less expeditious manner than did the porcupine.

"He can never get away, for he doesn't seem very nimble on his feet," replied Joe.

"If we can only get the cord on his foot or neck!"

"I can put it on all right if you will hold him," laughed Joe, and the bristling animal backed up toward the tree as if to prevent attack from the rear.

"I could hold him down with this pole if he would n't throw his quills at me."

"I don't think he can do anything of the kind. Chance him anyway; they would n't hurt much—Oh! Ouch!" yelled Joe, as he jumped back.

The little animal had assumed the offensive and settled one point in natural history, at least to Joe's satisfaction, for the porcupine had dropped down on one hind quarter, and with a jerk of his short tail much as one would snap a whip he sent half a dozen or more quills to the four points of the compass, one taking effect in the calf of Joe's leg.

"Ha! Ha! Ha!" laughed Tom.

"That hurts, I can tell you, if you do see so much fun in it," said Joe, as he pulled out the quill, which certainly could not have



penetrated very far, as he made no attempt to examine the wound.

"There's another quill sticking in the bark of the tree; he's a regular Gatling gun."

"Rather promiscuous firing; they went in all directions."

"It settles the fact that they can throw their quills."

"Not much like a throw, it was more like a jerk."

"Well, here's one way over here, at least fifteen feet from him, and I suspect more went in the grass.*

"Look out! He's going up the tree again!" shouted Joe, as they both rushed to the tree and with their sticks prevented the porcupine from climbing up again.

"Now, Joe, I can hold him here tight to the tree if you can slip that cord on his hind leg; it hangs down below his quills," directed Tom, and without any trouble Joe had the stout cord on the hind foot of the porcupine, which was now at their mercy.

*NOTE.—This ability of the porcupine is mentioned by Pliny and often ridiculed by moderns; yet is a fact, and has been observed by the author.

"We can drive him right down to camp," said Joe.

"Yes, and I have heard they are very good eating, just like pork. Poke him along, Joe! Don't let him stop to sit down, or he will give that tail another shake."

"I just wish he would send one into your leg; that hurts yet."

"I can imagine it does."

"I hope the doctor makes Hugill skin it and doesn't ask us to."

"Oh! what fun! Wouldn't he rave and tear! The doctor will be sure to want this fellow stuffed, and I don't think he would trust it to us; he has not forgotten the slash you put in that black fox skin yet," exclaimed Tom.

When the boys reached camp they found it quite deserted, save for the cook, Pat Molloy, and tying the porcupine to one of the wagon wheels, they told Pat to keep an eye on the wild pig they had caught.

"Faith, an' Oi'll moind 'im, but Oi niver saw the likes of sich bristhles in me loife,"

returned Pat, stooping down quite close to the animal to examine him better, which the fretful brute resented by the same maneuver as when first disturbed by the boys.

"Ach! Oh! Tare an' 'ounds! Whist! The devil take his bristhles! He's got 'em in me! bad 'cess to 'im!" shouted Pat, springing to his feet and jumping up and down like a madman, knocking at several quills sticking into him much as an excited person does at a lot of angry hornets.

"Stand still, Pat, stand still, and I'll pull them out," called Tom.

"Whoop! Musha! Ye may sthand still as ye loike wid a dozen hot petaters down yer back but Oi'm half human meself, avick!" howled Pat, who had nevertheless ceased his antics, and allowed the sharp quills to be pulled out.

"You don't want to go near him when you feed him, and he will be quiet enough."

"Faith, an' Oi'll feed him wid a club an' then he'll be aisy enough."

"Oh, we don't want to kill him until the others have seen him. The doctor may want to make some experiment on him."

"Faith, thin, an' Oi wish he would, to pay the ugly gossoon for the experiment he played on me."

"Ha! Ha! Ha! Well, never mind, Pat, but if you will give us a bit of lunch, we will eat and be off again," and after they had refreshed themselves with their early lunch, they started forth again, as boldly as if they had the entire day yet before them.

"I don't think we had best try and climb the mountains to-day; what do you think, Joe?"

"I'm a little afraid we would not more than get to the top of them before dark; we might go around the base of the first peak and see what kind of looking place there is between this and the next one."

"Very well, we will keep a little more to the right and go around that slope; we can keep up a little, striking just below that green spot," said Tom, pointing to a patch

of small firs. This was their objective point, and they walked rapidly until they reached it. Beyond them to the left was a gulch, which came from between two mountains.

"Let's follow up this and see what we shall find," suggested Tom, and on they went, chatting merrily about the fun they were going to have with the porcupine, before the poor animal should be executed. They saw several bands of mountain sheep climbing over steep trails up the sides of the mountains, for now the ravine had become a deep, gloomy canyon, whose rocky sides were the haunt and delight of these sure-footed beasts. The boys had been getting pretty well up, although the ascent had been so gradual they had hardly noticed it.

"We have gone about far enough from camp," remarked Tom.

Stopping to rest and turning about, they looked down the ravine through which they had just come. There on the prairie, and heading right in the direction of the mouth

of the ravine, the boys saw six or seven Indians.

"My goodness! Tom, what if those were to be hostiles, coming up here?" exclaimed Joe.

"They might be, but I hope not; no matter whether they are on the war-path or not, the chances are they are none too good," answered Tom.

"Look! They have discovered our tracks. They are getting off their ponies now!"

"Yes, they certainly have seen our foot prints; see the motions that fellow is making for them to come up this way."

"That is just what he is doing. How many do you make of them?"

"There are seven of them, I think: one looks like a half-breed; at least, he is all dressed in buckskin and seems to be giving orders to the rest," replied Tom, who held the field glass to his eyes.

"We are in a fix now."

"That's what we are."

"My goodness! What are we going to do?" and the boys looked blankly at each other, neither being able to answer the important question, and the frowning rocks on either side looked worse than discouraging.

CHAPTER XIII.

"We are caught like mice in a trap," sighed Tom, ruefully.

"Not yet, though; they are over a mile away yet," replied Joe, looking longingly up the sides of the almost perpendicular cliff on the left, which prevented them from starting immediately back to camp.

"Not that way, we have either to go on up this canyon until we can climb up to the left, or else we had best climb up here, to our right, as it's not too steep now."

"That will take us further from camp."

"We can climb up here to the right easily enough and when we get to that ledge up there, we may find better footing back of it, and possibly, we can then see our way out of this," said Tom, hurriedly.

"That's the best we can do."

"It's all rock here, and those Indians

can't see our tracks as they could down there in that sand."

"They can't ride up there on their ponies, and with this start we have of them, if the ground above is not too bad, we can give them the slip; no use getting frightened," said Joe.

"Well, come on, and be careful not to move a rock nor touch a bush, and they'll never know we've left the bottom of the canyon," and with renewed courage the boys sprang nimbly from rock to rock, and were soon up on the ledge they had seen from below.

"Whew! That's a climb; here is splendid traveling, and if we were only on the other side of this canyon we could soon run over that slope there and be in camp in no time," cried Joe.

"But we are not, and we've no time to lose in trying to get there; we must hurry along to the head of this canyon, without their being able to get up. These narrow canyons always start abruptly," replied

Tom, as he dashed along after Joe, for they had now hastened into a quick run, as the footing was exceedingly good.

"This side of the canyon is getting as steep as the other," remarked Joe.

"Oh, if the canyon only has perpendicular walls at the head of it, we are all right; it is fast growing narrower."

"Yes, and I think ahead, there, it surely ends, where all that green timber is; those trees don't grow in mid air."

"I hope so, I'm getting tired," replied Tom, who was straining his eyes so intently ahead, that he stumbled and nearly fell.

"Look out where you're going," called Joe, who stopped to permit Tom's catching up to him.

"I hope we can get around there, and I hope the Indians did not see us climbing up."

"Oh! They never saw us, I'm sure."

"I hope not; if they did we will know it when we get to the head of this canyon."

"If they did we can give them the slip among those rocks and trees," added Joe, who was more self-reliant than Tom.

On the boys ran, whenever the ground would allow of it, and at length they reached the green timber they had seen. Fortunately, the canyon had as abrupt a beginning as they had hoped for. If they had kept in the bottom of it, they would have been run into a corner, from which the perpendicular walls would have permitted no escape. Where they went around the head of this canyon the ground was very rough, consisting of washed granite boulders which might have been the bed of a stream, and it is quite probable that rushing torrents from melting snowbanks in the spring found an easy course along here and delighted in the perpendicular plunge of several hundred feet, to the basin of the canyon down below.

"Hurrah! What luck," shouted Tom, joyfully, as he skipped from rock to rock, for, as he afterward confessed, when down

in that dark, gloomy canyon his feelings were of the most somber shade.

"Keep quiet, Tom, don't hoot till you are out of the woods," whispered the cautious Joe.

"But they can't possibly catch us now; that side of the canyon has been too steep for a cat to climb up, and this side we have been following has been almost perpendicular ever since we left that place we came up."

"If we have no mishap, we are all right."

"Come on, let's run where we can!" and away they went, making as good use of their legs as they knew how, never going near to the edge of the cliff until they had reached a point nearly opposite to the place they had climbed up.

"About here we want to strike over for that slope, and then I think we'll have a bee line to camp."

"I'm going to crawl close to the edge here and have a look down to see what's

below," said Tom, as they both stopped to breathe a moment.

"I don't think I would, those fellows might be looking up and they have eyes like hawks, you know," replied Joe, leaning against the trunk of a tree and wiping the perspiration from his forehead. The day was exceedingly warm, and he had exerted himself to the utmost.

"I'll not expose myself at all, but I'd like to know what they are doing; they must be below us by this time."

"Be careful, now, and don't knock any rocks down," cautioned Joe, but his words were uttered at the very instant that Tom started back, his foot having loosened an immense boulder, which went crashing down below, carrying tons of rock before it, that had needed but a slight touch to tumble. Down the mass went, crashing! smashing! sending a thousand echoes through the quiet canyon and as many fears through the boys' hearts.



**TOM STARTED BACK, HIS FOOT HAVING LOOSENERED A HUGE BOULDER
WHICH WENT CRASHING DOWN BELOW.—Page 202.**

"I knew you'd do it," exclaimed Joe, snatching up his rifle which he had laid at his feet.

"Yes, 'I told you so,' why don't you say?"

"It's no use crying over spilt milk. We can't be more than four or five miles from camp, and after we get over that slope, I know we'll have a smooth down grade run, and no fear of them following us very close to camp."

"That's so; I wish now I'd stopped to see down in the canyon after all."

"It's better to waste no time; those fellows can run a pretty good foot race."

"Hurry on, then! No time to tarry!" shouted Tom, as he dashed ahead of Joe.

The top of the slope was soon reached and the boys saw that they had kept the lay of the country pretty well, for down below them, lay the camp and in a short space of time, considering the exertions they had undergone, they found themselves in the midst of their companions.

"Ha! Ha! Ha!" laughed Hugill, after the boys had told of their adventure, "you fellows must have been badly frightened, ye know. I'm blessed if I think you saw any Indians at all, not more than one, ye know. Come, now, own up, honor bright, lads."

"Oh! I could count them easily through my field glass, and could see them making signs."

"Ten men in buckram," said Falstaff. "I think it's one on you fellows, ye know. Why didn't you kill a few of them, instead of tumbling rocks down at them, as if they were frogs in a pond?" taunted Hugill.

"I am very glad you did not come to grief, and it shows me that I was very careless in letting you go off until our scouts had reconnoitered the country to see that there were no prowlers about," said Dr. Goon, seriously.

"We might ask for a company of infantry to escort them the next time, ye know," said Hugill, with a sneer.

"It were better to do so than to have harm befall them. You may dispatch that poor brute under the wagon and take his hide off as carefully as you can," returned the doctor.

"That's a beastly job! Why not let the boys tackle him?" growled Hugill, looking at the porcupine with a frown.

"Oh! 'Ten men in buckram!' He'll not hurt you any; hire a soldier, Mr. Hugill," laughed Tom, jumping over a couple of sacks of grain that had been used as a seat at the supper table.

"I want the boys to go down to the astronomical party's camp and bring up the remains of a big reptile that some of the men there killed to-day. I saw it there. You can ask them about it. It is a very peculiar looking snake; we have nothing like it, nor have we given much attention to ophiology of late," said the doctor.

"All right, doctor, shall we go now?" asked Tom, winking at Joe.

“Yes.”

“Can’t we wait half an hour or so?”

“What do you want to wait here for?” asked the doctor, removing his wig and rubbing his hand around and around his bald head as if to give it an extra polish.

“I wanted to wait and see Mr. Hugill skin that porcupine,” replied Tom, laughing uproariously.

“Run on, run on, you rascals, and mind your own business, or I’ll skin it myself.”

After the boys reached the camp they had no trouble in finding the snake, and were about returning when Major Troxwell came riding in, with a half dozen or more of their Indian scouts trailing along single file behind him. The major recognized his son, and at once called to him:

“Hullo, Thomas! This way, sir!”

Tom dropped his end of the pole on which they were carrying the snake, allowing the reptile to slide to the ground, and hastened to meet his father.

"Well, father, did you want me?"

"Yes, sir, I wanted the privilege of a few moments' conversation with you," replied the major, sternly, but with that quizzical look of good nature commingled with a father's admiration for an only son, which always robbed his severest tones of their poignancy when speaking to Tom.

"Well, sir?" said Tom, respectfully, for when his father spoke thus he was the soldier in every sense of the word, much to his father's hidden delight.

"Don't 'well, sir,' me! If it were anyone else I'd have you both put in irons and allow you to carry the log on your shoulders for twenty-four hours!"

"Why, sir, I don't understand you. What do you mean?" asked Tom, looking very much perplexed.

"What did you do it for? Don't you know that jokes of that kind often get people into trouble?"

"But I assure you, sir, I don't know

what you mean," said Tom, recalling all past capers but feeling certain that even those which might have reached his father's ears would not have been remembered over night.

CHAPTER XIV.

"You will be telling me next that you boys did not roll those rocks down on us. I saw you with my glass going up in that ravine and recognized you!" said the major, looking at Tom, and wondering if he had been mistaken after all.

"Good gracious! father, was it you with those Indians?"

"It was, sir, and it made no difference who it was, it might have killed some of us if we had been a moment later in passing that spot. You ought to have known better; a bit of rock as large as a walnut falling that distance might kill a man."

"I'm awful glad you weren't hurt, but I assure you, sir, the rocks were an accident."

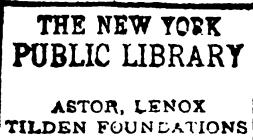
"An accident! They came near causing one."

"Well, I assure you, we did not intend rolling those rocks down; you see it was this way: Joe and I went up the ravine, and when we got to where we could look down on the prairie, we saw you coming up, and you, in that suit of buckskin, I mistook for a half-breed, with some hostile Indians. I knew, of course, you had a suit of buckskin, but you have not been wearing it lately."

"Then, as I look like a half-breed in it I think I had best not wear it any more."

"Now, father, you know I did not mean that, but with those Indians away over there, where we thought we were all alone, and—"

"Yes, I see, you fellows were frightened, and hurried out of there. But how did you get up out of that miserable place? We lost your tracks on the rocky ground, and the scouts were all certain that you were just ahead of us. We could not get up when we came to the end nor could a squirrel."





"AN ACCIDENT? THEY CAME NEAR CAUSING ONE!"—Page 211.

"We climbed up on the far side about opposite to where the rocks fell and then went around."

"Oh! That was it. I depended on the Indians and they kept saying you must be just ahead of us until we had to turn back, but you must have traveled pretty briskly."

"You know what we took your party for. I think the joke is decidedly on us," said Tom, with a smile, and his father broke out into a hearty laugh.

"I'm afraid you've incurred the ill will of my scouts, for they were very much frightened when those rocks tumbled."

"I don't care anything about their ill will."

"But you should. It is better to have the good opinion of all."

"That's where you and I differ, father. I think you care the least for the good opinion of anybody, yet strive the hardest to obtain it, of any one I know."

"Rather an anomalous disposition you seem to think I have. But you will find it's

the way of mankind. In our youth we care most for it, yet do the least to deserve it. If you boys actually mistook us for hostiles you have certainly had the worst of it. You may go, my son."

"If you'd seen us getting away from there, you'd have thought we were in earnest," declared Tom, as he left his father and hurried back to where Joe stood contemplating the snake.

"What's the matter? Your father looked provoked about something," questioned Joe, as he slid the small pole under the snake to carry it.

"Oh! no, that's just his way, but we've got our foot into it, now. Who do you think our hostile Indians were, that chased us to-day?"

"Who?"

"Father and some of his scouts, who were prowling about there, to find a good place to set up his instruments, to take observations."

"Well, I declare!" exclaimed Joe, raising his hands in surprise, forgetting that one of them held the pole.

"Oh! Ah! Don't! You'll have the nasty thing on me!" shouted Tom, dropping his end entirely and jumping back.

"He'll not hurt you, but Tom, you really don't mean that, do you? You're only joking; I know you, like a book."

"No, I'm not joking, it's true enough, and when those rocks fell, they were right below us, and came very near getting hurt. Father recognized us with his glass, and followed up the canyon to the end of it, and then they had to go back; he did not know how we got out, that's the best of the joke."

"The best of the joke we'll hear from Hugill. He'll say, 'only one man in buck-skin', now."

"That's so! What fools we've made of ourselves!" groaned Tom, looking dismally at Joe, who was trying to balance the snake over the pole, but every attempt proved one

half or the other to be the heavier, and made the reptile slide to the ground again.

"Run over and beg your father not to tell it," suggested Joe.

"That would do no good; wild horses would not keep him from telling the joke to the doctor," and now the snake appeared satisfied in its adjustment and the boys started on again.

"Then we must take the wind out of his sails by telling Dr. Goon, and throwing ourselves on his mercy, beg him not to tell Hugill of it for he will plague us forever about it."

"That's the best way; we must play the amiable to Mr. Hugill for a few days, and if he should hear of it he would not be so spiteful."

"All right, we might offer to skin this snake for him to-night; that would make his heart warm toward us," suggested Joe.

"Ugh! I'll never try to skin another snake; the last one I cut into made mesick for three

days," replied Tom, making counterfeit indications of being very ill.

"Well, I'll skin him. I'd just as lief skin him as to skin an eel."

"You would? Well, you may."

"All right, I will," and he was faithful to his word, for as soon as they deposited the specimen on a wide board back of the doctor's tent, that they called the dissecting table, Joe went to work at him and deprived him of his scaly hide.

The doctor was so pleased, that after hearing Joe's confession he readily consented to refrain from speaking of it to Mr. Hugill, and in this way the boys evaded his sarcastic remarks and taunting jeers.

"This is a wonderful group of mountains, and many might envy you your good fortune, in being the first explorers of them," remarked Dr. Goon the next morning at the breakfast table, as he helped himself to a piece of antelope steak.

"Why, doctor, you don't suppose we're the first explorers here, do you?" queried

Joe, his big eyes opening wide with astonishment.

"No, not exactly the first white men in here, but it is safe to say that very few have been here before; some stray hunter may have hunted here a day or two, but this is the great disputed hunting ground of the Indians, it being claimed by the Sioux nations on the south and the confederations of Blackfeet and Crows on the north, smaller tribes like the Mandan, Gros Ventre, and Crees never daring to come so near. By the way, the major told me last night that a scout brought in news of the finding of where quite a battle has taken place, within a month, and there are twenty-one dead Indians lying on the spot now."

"Where? Where?" exclaimed all.

"About twenty miles west of this."

"Twenty-one dead Indians! That's twenty-one good Indians, and it would be quite a sight to see, ye know," said Hugill.

"A horrible sight, most likely, and I hope we don't have to go near it," answered the doctor.

"Faith, an' more's the pity the durty divils didn't end it loike the Kilkenny cats, bad 'cess to the spalpeens," contributed Pat, as he replenished the large platter with hot, juicy steaks from that nimble little animal that furnishes the finest meat of any game.

"I'm going to try one more of those steaks, Pat. Antelope cooked over a wood fire discounts buffalo hump cooked over that abominable fuel we've had to use lately."

"Pat says that he is going to give us a famous roast to-day if that porcupine is anything like a pig."

"If not, it may remind you slightly of the pork you pine for, eh, boys? Ha! Ha! Ha!" laughed the doctor.

"I consider that a base usurpation of power, ye know, a despotic thrust at our liberties; blessed if any one else would have dared to make such a pun, ye know," cried Hugill.

"I must beg pardon for it, and shall pay the fine agreed upon."

"Oh, we'll let you off this time, doctor," said Tom.

"Yes, if he'll promise not to do it again," added Hugill, as they all left the table.

Tom and Joe made no remonstrance when told to prospect about the mountains during the day by the doctor, and Hugill noticing this strange incongruity, remarked to the doctor that the boys must have been frightened at their shadows the day before, or they would not be so well pleased at having to revisit the spot so soon, but the merry twinkle in the doctor's eyes as he adjusted his wig more to his satisfaction on his head, as was his wont when thinking deeply on a subject, disclosed nothing. It was nearly noon when the boys found themselves beyond the first mountain peak which had, as yet, disclosed no favorable ascent, and a deeply timbered slope beyond looked so inviting that they entered it, walking carefully along, watching for a

startled deer or elk whose tracks were very plentiful.

"I think we've gone far enough," remarked Joe, as they came to an opening in the timber.

"Well, let's cross this place and have a look down that gulch over there," suggested Tom.

"Agreed, and then we turn back."

"All right," and they continued on their journey of exploration; coming to the gulch they found the timber less dense.

"What's that down there, Joe?"

"That's so; looks like some Indian tepees to me."

"No false alarm this time."

"Those are queer looking lodges, and now they seem to be made of buffalo robes. I declare, they are made of robes, and the finest kind of ones, too," cried Joe, looking through the glass.

"But there are no signs of any one about, are there?"

"No, not the slightest, no signs of a fire or anything else about; it is perfectly deserted."

"We can go down to that next point of rocks and crawl up close, to make sure, and, if it is a deserted camp, we may as well have those fine robes," saying which the boys picked their way carefully to the next point of rocks, and cautiously creeping along, hiding behind the large trees, they managed to get quite close.

"How still it is! If any Indians were about we'd hear their dogs or papoosees making a noise," said Joe.

"Good gracious, Joe! Look! Look at the robes now!"

CHAPTER XV.

“THE robes! Well, for goodness sake, what queer looking buffalo robes! How the curly hair seems to shake and tremble in the wind!” exclaimed Joe, standing up in full view.

“I’ll risk there being anyone here,” declared Tom, advancing, with his rifle at full cock.

“Two of those tepees are very small.”

“Yes, but those robes are the queerest looking things I ever saw. I don’t believe they are robes at all, they are nothing but dried leaves!”

“Well! That’s a fact; they have woven willows with the leaves on, into the lodge poles!”

“That’s all they are. I thought it funny if they were buffalo robes.”

“Well, they looked just like robes; but I don’t see any openings in these things.”

“No way to get into them at all.”

“You see there are no signs of any one’s having lived here; the grass shows no signs of a path, nor even having been stepped on.”

“No, nor is there a trace of any fire ever having been made.”

“Not a trace!”

“This looks mighty queer.”

“Mighty queer,” assented Joe, looking about him for a solution to the mystery.

“This has been made by Indians,” Tom declared, looking very wise.

“Of course it has, but when and what for, is the question.”

“It can’t have been done more than a month ago or these leaves would not be hanging yet, nor much less or they would not be so dried.”

“What’s that hanging to the long pole of this big one?” asked Joe, pointing up to one long slim pole that pointed off to the east.

“It looks like a bundle of old rags.”

“These tepees are like wicker baskets, and

I'm going to see what's inside of them," and Joe, going up to one of the small ones tore an opening in the closely woven willow withes.

"Nothing in this but dried leaves," reported Tom, who followed Joe's example and was tearing into the other small one.

"That's all I've found here; let's tackle the big one."

"We are putting modern improvements in them, in the shape of windows," laughed Tom, as they went over to the largest tepee and with little ceremony tore a hole in it that would have done very well for a door.

"We'll show the architect of these structures that he did not know it all."

"I don't see what they could have used these for, certainly not to live in."

"Rather ethereal castles."

"Some romantic Romeo of a Blackfoot may have eloped with a dusky Juliet of a Sioux, and spent the honeymoon here," suggested Tom, laughing.

"Quite likely, and killed and buried old

Capulet right under this wicker monument, for here's a gun, which looks as if it were used in his time," cried Joe, dragging a rusty old flint lock musket out from among the pile of dried leaves inside.

"Hurrah for Guy Fawkes!" shouted Tom, seizing the gun, and in trying to take it away from Joe he pulled the old stock from the barrel.

"These things are graves, and if an Indian were to catch us here, he would kill us; even one of our own scouts would make a great fuss."

"Goodness! I'm more afraid of the defunct; he may have died of small pox!"

"Whew! That's so, let's leave these things and make tracks out of this."

"I'm glad I was vaccinated lately; were you?"

"Yes, only last spring. Oh, I don't care for that, but do you suppose these are really graves?"

"Of course they are; that's the way they bury their dead. That bunch of rags repre-

sents scalps taken by a big brave. They kill a couple of horses so that he will have something to ride in the happy hunting grounds, and lay his best rifle on the grave, but as I've been told they don't leave it; his relatives sneak in and change it for a worthless one."

"Well, let's get away from here; those dead fellows are worse than the live ones," repeated Joe, and then they hurried down the gulch.

"I think this will bring us out on the west side of the mountains again, don't you, Joe?"

"It is sure to take us out of the mountains if we keep following it down hill."

"Of course, but it may be taking us in the wrong direction."

"Well, we can climb up toward that pass between those two peaks over there, and I think from there we can go down the other side and straight to camp."

It was much farther than the boys had supposed, and in places very rocky. When

they reached the main divide they found themselves on a beautiful grassy spot, between two rough, jagged peaks. In the narrowest place this level spot was not more than two hundred feet wide.

“We are up pretty high, here,” remarked Tom, as he glanced up at the mountain tops on either side of them, and then took a survey of the immense stretch of prairie rolling out for hundreds of miles beyond them, dotted here and there with herds of buffalo. To the west of them, they could see the grand old range, which few have seen to greater advantage than from this particular point.

“What a view! What a magnificent view!” exclaimed Tom, removing his hat as if the solemn grandeur called for some mark of reverence.

“Oh, what a magnificent sight! One hundred and forty-five miles due west from us, and those peaks to the northwest sinking out of sight from the mere immensity of distance must be two or three hundred miles away. Who can tell how far those distant,

hazy mountains are?" said Joe, who took an artist's delight in a scene like this.

"What lots of snow on those to the north!"

"Yes, those peaks up there must be much higher than those on our side of the line. I suppose that snow never melts."

"Probably not; that must be Chief Mountain, that big square topped one due west of us."

"Yes, that must be it from the descriptions I've heard of it, and what a monument to mark our boundary!"

"Nature anticipated the subdivision of these two great countries."

"Yes, it looks that way. Look! See that band of mountain sheep coming this way! They intend coming through this pass. We can hide in this long grass and they are sure to come within easy range of us," cried Joe, and they both secreted themselves in the long grass.

"How sweet this grass smells, Joe; just rub some of it on your hands."

"That is more than fragrant, just like some perfumes," replied Joe, in a whisper, as he plucked a handful of the long, yellowish green grass.

"That's the sweetest thing I ever smelled of, and I would not wonder if that is what gives the name to these hills."

"These are pretty fair sized mountains, I should think."

"Only hills compared to those massive heights over there," replied Tom.

"Raise up a little and see if those sheep are heading this way."

"Yes, they are out of the rocks now, and are heading this way all right, and scattering out, too," whispered Tom.

"There must be a hundred of them."

"More than that, it's the largest band I've seen yet."

"The doctor says that these are not mountain sheep at all, but properly speaking the big horn."

"If we can kill one of them we'll find out

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TWO LOUD REPORTS RANG OUT.

what they are; I dare say they don't taste much like mutton."

"I should think they would."

"Keep quiet; don't speak so loud; the wind is blowing from them to us and we'll have a splendid chance at them. They don't seem to be eating this grass at all but are walking right along."

"How close are they now?" whispered Joe.

"Close enough, now. Get ready; you shoot to the right and I'll pick one out to left," replied Tom, as they both raised themselves and with one knee on the ground took deliberate aim at the startled animals. It was a fine sight, this magnificent band of bighorns, their massive heads thrown into the air, giving warning to the unconscious members in the rear to turn and fly.

Two loud reports rang out into the stillness of the mountain heights and two of the noblest of the brute creation stumbled and fell! A few useless struggles and all was over for them. Death had met them in

a form never dreamed of in their most timid moments. That remaining taint of our former barbarism showed itself in the pleasure experienced by the boys, at the result of their shots.

“Don’t shoot any more, Tom!” exclaimed Joe, but Tom was deaf to all entreaties. Bang! Bang! Bang! went the report of his rifle, but whether he hit any or not he never knew; the entire herd leaving as if on the wings of the wind.

“What a band of them! We ought to have killed a dozen,” exclaimed Tom, in a disappointed tone.

“And what for? We have more than we want,” responded Joe, as they went over to where their noble quarry lay, staining the sweet scented grass with their crimson life-blood.

“We may never get another such chance to shoot them.”

“It does seem a pity to kill such beautiful creatures. What magnificent horns!”

“That buck’s make two complete turns.”

"Look at the size of it, here, close to his head—at least seven inches thick."

"What will the doctor say? He will be delighted."

"We have not gotten them back to camp yet," observed the practical Joe, taking out his knife and severing the main artery in their throats. He then proceeded to clean them.

"We've got to find a way to get out of here that a mule can pack over," said Tom, as he held the animal balanced on his back.

"I think if we follow the same trail that the band came up here on, it will prove the best way down."

"We'll try it, and if it takes us down to the prairie, we can soon find our way back to camp, for we will be on the north side of the hills."

"There, that will do for the present; we will leave them piled up here, one on top of the other, and I'll tie my handkerchief to this fellow's horn; that will keep the wolves away," and then they both pushed forward

to find the trail on which the sheep had come up.

It is seldom the downward path is not taken without regret, but as the path the boys were now traveling was one approved of by the dumb brutes, it brought about the most happy results.

"This trail would be a good one for a pack train," remarked Tom.

"Yes, but I believe it's more tiresome going down than it was climbing up," answered Joe, as they both rested themselves on the trunk of a fallen fir tree.

"We shall have no trouble coming up here with the pack mule, shall we?"

"No, if the rest of the way be as good as it has been so far. How many times the sheep and deer must have trodden this trail to have marked it out so plainly!"

"But will not the doctor be delighted at our game?"

"He will indeed."

"I think they will prove to be the big

horn, and that is what he is anxious to get."

Then being sufficiently rested the boys picked up their traps and followed the trail on down but found themselves when they reached the prairie several miles from camp. Their anticipation of the doctor's delight found a complete realization, and the next morning he sent them back with a mule and teamster under their orders.

CHAPTER XVI.

IT is easier to find a camp on the prairie than it is to find the indistinct termination of a mountain trail, and the teamster was thoroughly disgusted before the boys found the path that had brought them down out of the heights the evening before, but when found and fully satisfied that they were on the right one they lost no time in commencing the ascent. Here and there they stopped to pick ferns and flowers that grew in great profusion in the rich earth of the mountain ravines. The tall fir trees lent a grateful shade, and innumerable springs contributed to form the ice cold rivulets from which all were frequently drinking. The poor water of the prairies made them appreciate this, the greatest of nature's gifts—good water.

Although the boys had grumbled at coming down that long trail, yet they

found much more objection to it when they made the ascent.

"Wall, boys, whar be they?" asked the teamster, who was a rough specimen of the Missouri backwoods type, as he drew a long breath, on reaching the top of the divide.

"Oh! we're almost there now; they lie about the center of this grassy spot," rejoined Tom, who was himself puffing like a young grampus; indeed the only one that had any breath left was the mule, and this intelligent animal was trying to express his opinion of the sweet smelling grass about his feet with grunts of dissatisfaction, for to him it was as the apples of Sodom. The d.licious perfume arising from this peculiar grass was not attractive to the mule in a gastronomic light, and the disappointed brute sniffed about among the roots, but never took a mouthful of it.

"Yeou do n't seem to like it eny too much, eh, old pard?" drawled the driver, addressing his remark to the mule.

"He does not, for a fact, nor did the sheep yesterday when they crossed it; they seemed to be walking along smelling of it and not eating it," remarked Tom.

"That stuff ain't no good, nohow. If a mule takes one smell of enythin' an' don't bite at it, spech'ly as old a mule as that, an' he's all of forty, then nuthin' 'll eat it, an' that's what I say," said the driver, giving this logical conclusion to his remarks in the most learned way.

"Forty years! That's pretty old for a mule, is it not?" asked Joe.

"No, 'taint; mules live ter be a hundred, right along, if eny count was kept of 'em. Yeou never see a mule die of old age? No, nor nobody else," continued the driver, catching up the mule's halter rope and starting him along.

"Can't say I ever did, that's a fact."

"When I was out with Custer, last summer, I had a mule in my outfit, they called 'Old Humpy,' and the men counted him up

from the different years we had all druv him an' he came nigh bein' a hundred."

"And were you really out with Gen. Custer?" asked Tom.

"Yes, I was out with him last summer and drove the menag'ry wagon."

"What kind of a wagon?"

"The menag'ry wagon. Yeou see Custer was allers pickin' up wild cats an' porky-pines and sich truck, an' he kept 'em in the wagon I drove."

"You must have had a nice time with such passengers."

"Perty soft berth, I tell yeou; most as easy as yeou 'bug catchers' have."

"And that was why it was called the menagerie wagon?"

"Yes, that's it, and I'm getting thirsty again. D' yeou sellers see any springs on top of the divide when up here yesterday?"

"Yes, there is a large spring right on top of the divide."

"I'll bet that's whar them sheep was a headin' fur."

"Yes?"

"That's what they was after; about noon, wasn't it?"

"A little after."

"That accounts for it all."

"They were going for a drink, you think?"

"Yes, an' thar's yer game, eh?" as they came upon the two fine carcasses just as they had left them the day before.

"Yes; fine ones, aren't they?"

"Humph! Fair."

"Why, did you ever see larger ones?" exclaimed Tom, opening his eyes wide in astonishment at this slight appreciation.

"Wall, naow! I should jest smile."

"With larger horns than that fellow's?" asked Tom, as he took the handkerchief off from it, and handed it to Joe.

"Wall, yes. I've seen 'em in the Black Hills, so big that these 'ere would be little kids compared to 'em."

"Oh! yes."

"Fact, 'pon my word. I seen one big feller killed down thar, with horns that twisted round makin' a circle as big as the hind wheel of a Murphy wagon."

"I should think you would be thirsty thinking up such a fish story as that. It's made me feel thirsty to hear it," retorted Joe, laughing.

"I vote we go over to the spring and get some water; we can eat our lunch there," suggested Tom.

"I don't keer so much fur myself but the mule must have a drink."

"Well, he can have one, too."

"All right, I'm with yeou, as soon as I drap this 'ere pack saddle, no use ter take it along," added the teamster, and, after taking it from the mule's back he piled it with its trappings on top of the sheep; then leading the mule along he followed after the boys. Over by the spring they found good grass for the mule.

"Old Jack will fare sumptuously," remarked Tom.

"The quantity will pass muster but the quality of it won't do 'im no good."

"Mules are tough, they can stand it."

"Neow that's just like a bug catcher! Yeou fellers get so used ter stickin' pins in butterflies and bottlin' toads that yeou don't think a mule is near half human."

"Well, not quite half."

"Neow, thar yeou mistake; a mule knows what's good treatment better'n any man livin' 'cept his driver, and that proves it."

"They ought to know between them."

"You empty the lunch basket, Tom, I'm going to have another drink," said Joe, handing the basket to Tom.

They ate and drank, enjoying themselves as only boys can. The teamster sharing everything equally had somewhat the best of them as he had but one mouth to feed, and as he thrust the last half biscuit into his capacious mouth, having eaten one half of the provisions brought, he mumbled something, which from the crowded state of that

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"WHY, TO WASH OUT A FEW PANFULS OF THIS DIRT?"

cavernous orifice was entirely unintelligible to the boys.

“What did you say?” asked Tom.

“Why,—I said—as how I’d like—to prospect this ’ere little stream a bit.”

“Prospect! How? I don’t know what you mean.

“Why, to wash out a few panfuls of this dirt.”

“What for?”

“To see if there is any gold in it.”

“Do they ever find gold in this kind of a place?”

“Why, I thought as every one knew whar they found gold.”

“Well, I don’t; is this a promising spot?”

“Wall, I should say so! This ’ere bar is full of washed gravel deposit, and the chances are good; we found it in the Black Hills in a poorer lookin’ spot nor this.”

“I wonder if we could find some if we looked about us a little.”

“Ho! Ho! Ho! That’s purty good. I thought bug catchers were pretty smart!

Ha! Ha! Ha! Wall, I never! Did ye think it was on top of the dirt to be picked up?"

"I did not suppose it was very plenty, but you said this was a good place to find it, and I did not know but what we might pick up a very small bit, just for a specimen."

"Oh! yes, but yeou see it's most allers found on bed rock or near it. I've seen it in the grass roots, but it was when the bed rock was near ter the surface."

"Did you ever dig out much gold?" asked Tom, putting the question as mildly as possible in deference to the fact that his question so much as implied a doubt.

"Did I ever dig out eny gold? Wall, neow, I should smile! Why, tons an' tons of it. I went ter Californy in '60 an' have been minin' an' prospectin' ever since."

"That's a long time at it."

"Yes, an' I can tell at a glance what the chance is ter find gold, an' I think right here it's good!"

"What's the first thing to do to get some of it? I don't mind filling my pockets while I'm here," said Joe, who was rather sceptical concerning this class of stories.

"Wall, I'll tell ye, the main thing is ter find a likely spot an' then sink a shaft, an' when yeou come ter pay dirt, pan it out and see if thar's anything in it. Down below us whar that ridge of rock sticks up, thar's a channel an' if its gravel thar, like this 'ere spot, I reckon gold can be found by diggin' fur it," replied the teamster, nodding his head as he gave this graphic description.

"Let's go down and have a look at that place," proposed Tom.

"We can take this cup and wash out some sand any way," assented Joe, picking up their tin drinking cup and starting down toward the place, followed by the others.

Here they walked about the sand and gravel, vaguely building castles in the air as to what they would do if they could only find a great big nugget of gold.

"I don't see any signs of gold here," began Tom.

"Why, can't you understand we've got to dig for it?" replied Joe.

"Well, we've not the tools to dig with nor the time either," retorted Tom.

"Neow look 'ere, boys, I'm goin' to wash out some of this sand," declared the teamster, as he scooped up a cupful of mud and gravel. "This is a mighty mean thing ter pan in, but I may get a color or two," he added, as he stooped down beside a little pool in the rocks, and with a gentle rocking motion kept the dirt in commotion, allowing all the coarse grains of sand and rock to escape, keeping the fine back to the last. When it was all gone but a spoonful of black sand he turned the cup to the sun and, after one glance into it, sprang up and shouted:

"Whoop! Hurrah! Jest look at that! Jest look at that! Jeemses River! Look at that!"

CHAPTER XVII.

"LET's see it," exclaimed both Tom and Joe, grasping the cup at the same instant.

"Hold on, don't be so previous, young fellers; yeou can both see it if yeou take time," replied the teamster, twisting the cup away from them.

"Well, do let's see it."

"All right, look at it, but don't tear the handle off the cup."

"I don't see anything but black stuff in it," cried Tom.

"Neither do I," chimed Joe.

"Thar's a good big payin' prospect in that ar' cup, an' don't yeou forgit it."

"Well, get some more of the sand out of it, and let's see it then," growled Joe, and the teamster after giving the cup a few mystic shakes, canted it up to the sun, and then the boys could plainly see a yellow

streak nearly covered with the black sand.

"Is that gold?" asked Tom.

"Course 'tis! Whatever did yeou think were heavier nor black sand?"

"I don't pretend to know anything about it, as I told you at first."

"Wall, that's gold, an' thar's lots of gold right under us. Yeou see, I scraped this dirt up from the creek bottom, right on this granite strip here; wall, that's the reg'lar bed rock, just the same as if we'd dug a hun'red foot for it."

"If that stuff is gold I wish we could come up here and dig up a lot of it."

"That ar' is a thing we can't do now, but I'll tell yeou what, we must keep dark about it an' tell nobody, an' when we get through with this outfit we'll come back an' make a stake right here."

"Why not tell of it?"

"Cause somebody 'll jump our claim. We want ter keep quiet an' claim this 'ere spot, an' we'll come back some day an' work it."

"All right, I'll agree to that; will you, Joe?"

"Oh, yes."

"Wall, that's a go, an' nobody's to give it away; if we do we'll never get nothin' out of it."

"All right, we'll never do so much as to mention it to a soul; but as we can't do anything now, I think we'd better get the mule and go back and pack up our game; it's near noon."

"Move it is, then! Yeou bug catchers are in command of this 'ere expedition an' I'm willin' ter obey orders."

"Well, come on, Joe, don't stand there fooling with that cup all day," called Tom, as Joe made no attempt to move.

"Go ahead, I'll catch you," returned Joe, as he stood for a few minutes with the cup in his hands, fascinated with its contents. Then washing out the cup he hurried on after the others.

It took them but a very short time to pack the two carcasses on the mule, as the

teamster was an adept with the diamond hitch, the intricacies of which the boys failed to discern although explained to them several times, by the accommodating teamster.

"I don't think we need to go back the way we came up; we can let him go back with the mule, and you and I can take a turn through that gulch beyond and come out of the mountains to the east; what do you say, Joe?"

"I'm willing; we may find something worth picking up down there."

"Well," said Tom, speaking to the teamster, "you can go on back the way we came up and we'll take a spin down the other gulch."

"All right, all the same ter me; yeou are the boss, young feller," replied that individual, and then, picking up the mule's halter, he led him away.

The boys turned their backs on him and disappeared in the other direction.

"What do you think of that stuff we found in the cup, Joe?"

"I don't know what to think of it; the more I looked at it, the more it puzzled me."

"Don't you think it was gold?"

"No, and I think that teamster is an old fraud."

"Why?"

"I can't say why, nor can I say that stuff was not gold, but I don't think it was, that's all."

"What was it, then?"

"That I don't know. I'm not sure it's not gold; it was queer stuff, but I've read that there are many things that look like gold that are worthless, and as that man said this was gold I simply believe it's not."

"That 'logical deduction,' as old Prof. used to say, is not very flattering to the teamster, and I'm inclined to believe it's the pure thing."

"It might have been."

"I really think so, or he would not have wanted us to keep so quiet about it."



"I think he just said that to make us want to tell somebody, and then when we made a big excitement about it, we would be laughed at nicely, and he'd have his little joke, don't you see?"

"I shouldn't wonder if that was just it," answered Tom, in no wise anxious to be laughed at.

"Shall we follow down the gulch or keep up to the left?"

"I think we would better keep in the bottom of the gulch and follow it down; if we come out on the east side, we will have a long walk back to camp."

The timber was dense, making a most delicious shade after the burning heat of the prairies, and they both enjoyed the change. Magnificent pines stood about in profusion, some of them being perfect giants of their species. On they went for some four or five miles, and then the gulch widened out into quite a valley, the timber being only on the hills at the side.

"What a beautiful spot," cried Joe.

"Yes, this will make a man a fine farm some day."

"Everything handy, wood, water and a good soil."

"Everything indeed, except that it's beyond civilization."

"That condemns it."

"Yes; I think we would better shape our course toward that point of timber to the left and then we can skirt around to the north side of the mountains," said Tom, pointing to a small grove of pines about a mile below them. They walked without changing their course to this little grove and here Tom proposed to rest, saying:

"I don't know how you feel, but I'm getting tired."

"Well, we can rest for half an hour."

"Don't you feel tired?"

"No, I can't say that I do."

"Oh! You are never tired."

"Yes, I am very often tired, but not just now. There's a tree over there that seems

to have a lot of the bark cut off from it; I wonder what could have done that."

"Where?"

"Away over beyond those rocks; you rest here, and I'll walk over and investigate it," said Joe, and when within a few feet of the tree, he at once discovered that the bark had been carefully cut away for at least two feet square. A closer investigation disclosed the fact that this had been done many years ago; and in the solid wood of the tree thus exposed, had been cut by the hand of man the date 1850; under this the letters "W. A. C." Below this were cut four circles, each one being below and to the right of the one above, the top one being the largest, each growing smaller as they descended. Each of these circles was connected by two lines drawn as closely to each other as the rough work would allow, and below this curious device were the unmistakable representations of a pick and shovel.

"Oh! Tom, bestir your lazy bones and come over!" shouted Joe.

"What is it? I'm too comfortable here to move," replied Tom, making no effort to change his position.

"Come on over and see; something is cut in this tree."

"Bear's scratching, most likely."

"No, it's not; come here."

"You just want to get me up," growled Tom, but his curiosity was sufficiently excited to cause him to leave his comfortable position at the foot of the tree and to join him.

"Well, what is it, Joe?"

"Here is something of interest. This has been cut by some white man; the date and his initials are plain but what the rest of those hieroglyphics mean I can't imagine."

"That date is plainly 1850, and those big letters 'W. A. C.' must have been his initials," said Tom, placing his hand on the scarred tree trunk which was protected by

a corrugated coating of resinous exudations.

"Yes, that's all plain, but what does the rest of this mean? That is a pick and shovel down there."

"That means that the man was here in 1850 and that he was a miner or prospector looking for gold."

"And perhaps he found a lot and buried it under this tree!"

"Not likely; he might have hidden it about here somewhere but he would not have marked the spot so plainly."

"But what can all these circles mean connected in this way?" asked Joe.

"Ask me an easy one. We can't find out the mystery by standing here looking at it; it was done a good many years ago, by the way the bark of the tree has grown around this blaze."

"It must have been done in just about that year. Maybe the poor fellow was killed by Indians."

"I should n't wonder, but we had best start for camp, we'll not get back before dark now."

"Well, I'm ready, go and get your rifle and come on."

"It must be ten miles to camp."

"Yes, and more," agreed Joe, as they resumed their journey.

They were getting away from the timbered hills and the scorching heat above the sunburnt prairies was very severe, and the ground was fairly radiating with its intensity. They were walking along rapidly, avoiding here and there spots where the cacti grew so dense and thick that the leather of their shoes was no protection to their feet, when they both suddenly stopped, as directly in front of them was a round hole in the earth of some four feet in diameter, which went down like a well.

"What in the world made this here?" exclaimed Tom.

"Somebody dug it probably," replied Joe.

"That could hardly be, as there's no trace of any dirt thrown about here."

"Maybe it's a bear's hole!"

"No! How could any bear climb up out of such a perpendicular shaft?"

"Well, I give it up; if I had a rope I'd go down and find out what it was."

"I'd hate to go down into that horrible hole. How do you know what might not be down there?"

"Nothing very dangerous; it doesn't look as if it were ever made by the hand of man. This is a hard clay soil below the first few inches of top dirt and I think it's a cave," replied Joe.

"We can mark the spot and come here to-morrow with a rope."

"All right, I'll tie my handkerchief to my ram rod and leave it sticking up here, as in no other way could we ever find this hole again even if we were to hunt about here for a month," said Joe, and, after making a respectable flag of his handkerchief, they both hurried on back to the camp.

CHAPTER XVIII.

THE discovery of this mysterious shaft caused much commotion in the naturalist's camp, and even Mr. Hugill evinced other than his usual *blase* interest in the proposed exploration. The doctor's belief that it was in some way connected with the symbols on the tree was shared by him. His willingness to make one of a party to investigate may have been augmented by the stories of hidden gold dust and buried nuggets that had been started by the teamster who was now sailing under the sobriquet of "the old '49er!" All wanted to go, but the doctor willed otherwise, and proposed that he himself and Joe should go over on a couple of the mules with a rope and some candles and see the bottom of the hole if it were possible, and, as the doctor said, "It will most likely prove to be but a shallow

affair; there will be no need of more of us."

And so the matter was settled. Joe had no difficulty in finding the place. The doctor was somewhat disappointed, but just what he had expected to find he did not say, only that,—

"This is a mighty small hole to make such a talk about."

"You could not have thought to find a hole like the Mammoth cave of Kentucky," rejoined Joe, laughingly.

"No, no, but I'm afraid we'll have but little use for our rope."

"We can't tell, sir; I'd not like to jump down without a rope."

"No, of course not; we must take no chances," acquiesced the doctor, as Joe was untying the rope from his mule. They both then looked down into the shaft and thought it pretty deep after all.

Meanwhile the two saddle mules, finding themselves free from restraint, took to their heels and made back to camp on the run.

"Well! well! That's too bad. How careless of me, sir!" exclaimed Joe, with a serious look on his face.

"Never mind, Joe, it can't be helped now, and we'll not mind the walk home."

"The walk is nothing to me, sir, but quite a long one for you."

"No matter, we can take it leisurely and we'll get there all right."

"It is unfortunate, to say the least; but now I've dropped the rope down and I think it touches bottom. If you can hold it, I'll slide down."

"I don't know; you are pretty heavy, you see."

"Keep back from the edge pretty well and the edge of the hole will take the most of the weight," said Joe, and after further instructions he grasped the rope and gave it a shake, saying:

"I think it's on bottom."

"All right, I'm ready, Joe, are you?" cried the doctor, twisting his end into a

knot, and then bracing himself in a manner to be the most effective.

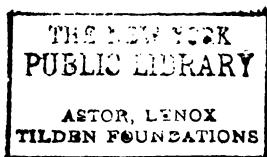
“Yes.”

“Then do be careful.”

“Oh! I will, don’t you worry about me,” replied Joe, as he sat down on the edge of the black yawning pit, and taking hold of the rope with both hands swung himself clear. Sliding down, he kept himself in position and away from the walls with his feet.

Down! Down! Down! he went, until all that could be seen of him by the doctor was the gleam of his white hands holding to the rope. Joe was an athletic lad, and could go up and down a rope equal to any sailor, and an adventure like this was very agreeable to his intrepid disposition.

Nearing the lower end of the rope he went slower and slower until he thought he surely must be near the end. Then a little farther and he thought his feet must be near the bottom and yet they were not, but he





NEARING THE LOWER END OF THE ROPE HE WENT
SLOWER AND SLOWER.—Page 268.

could feel that he was near the end of his rope. The end of it was at his knees!

"Lower down a bit, sir," he shouted as loudly as he could, and the doctor, hearing, came yet a little closer.

"How's that now, Joe?" yelled the doctor, coming nearer the edge.

"More yet, if you can," responded Joe.

"How's that?" from the doctor between his teeth, as in nearing the edge of the hole he had more weight to sustain, and it was becoming all he could do to hold on.

"Not enough," came up from the bottom of the pit, and what was the doctor to do? He dared not even confess it to himself that his own strength was giving out and that to come nearer the hole might cause Joe's weight to drop him down too if he did not let go. But what was he to do? A foot nearer and Joe might gain a footing. He would try it, although he realized the seriousness of the situation.

Puffing and straining with this unaccustomed exertion he stepped a foot nearer.

Great Heavens! It seemed as if there were a ton on the end of the rope. He tried to gasp out another question to Joe. His foot slipped! The rope dragged harder! The doctor stumbled, threw out his hands and barely saved himself from going down the hole. But he had let the rope slip! It disappeared down the shaft!

Joe, at the bottom, holding to the rope did not realize how short a reserve of that article the doctor had retained, and as he felt himself being let down a couple of feet at a time in a jerky manner he employed himself in sliding down just as far as he could at his end. Then without a moment's warning he found himself on his back descending with a velocity that he was unable to check, into impenetrable darkness. How far he went he could not conjecture. He had not even had time to think about calling out before he found himself in a stifling cloud of dust and dried grass, shooting down into that unknown region below. The shaft had gone down perpendicularly

as far as the length of the rope but from there it had made quite an angle.

His fall was broken gradually by the incline becoming less steep, and after coming to a stop, his first move caused him to slide yet a little farther. This of course made him cautious as in that impenetrable darkness there was no telling what a few feet of further advance might mean. He turned his head cautiously to look behind him as he slid his hand into his pocket for his candle, but no light came down from above and he knew that his impromptu descent must have carried him some distance from the bottom of the shaft. Joe was about to strike a match, when his blood was chilled and the very marrow of his bones seemed turned to ice by what felt like a cold damp hand being placed on his cheek. It was an impulse born of the moment that caused him to drop his candle and dash his hands frantically about his head in a mad determination to lay hold of something, but all such endeavors were

productive of no tangible results, and he questioned himself if it were not all his own imagination. The timidity which no powers of will could drown, and the horrible uncertainty of what might be in front of him caused his hand to tremble perceptibly as he fumbled in his pockets for another match. This he lit and carefully held above him, to enable him to find his candle, when to his amazement and horror, before he was able to discern his surroundings by its feeble glare, *it was blown out and he was again in darkness!*

It had been to him the darkness of midnight, but now it was darkness so somber and dreadful that his boy's heart beat in great thumps against his ribs, as he with trembling hand sought another match. A realizing sense of his position down in the bowels of the earth had not as yet presented itself to Joe, as the dread of this unseen and ghostly tenant had absorbed his entire attention. Dark and quiet as the grave, and Joe thinking that there might be virtue

in his own voice to uphold his courage, even if it did not daunt his mysterious tormentor, shouted as loudly and gruffly as he could, "You do that again and I'll knock your head off," but his voice had an unnatural sound, reverberating back to him with unholy intonations which would in themselves have frightened him, had he not in the next instant felt a faint puff of wind fan his face and a lock of his hair experience a decided pull!

Again he dashed his arms frantically about, but there was nothing to lay hold of. Once only had he imagined his fingers touched something in mid air, and yet he was not certain, but now, distinctly hearing a diabolical chattering, he had no desire to verify the idea by again striking in that direction. It was a shrill chattering, or more of a hissing noise, keen and piercing like the sharpening of a saw with a file, which now added its terrors to the situation.

Another match, thought Joe, and now with the greatest care he lit two or three at the same time determined to have light enough to find his candle. After striking the matches he guarded them carefully with his hands, and it was only by using the greatest precaution that they were not blown out at once, as he could feel puffs of wind from all directions. Before the matches were fairly ablaze the very atmosphere about him seemed to be in commotion, he was in the center of a whirlwind, the air went round and round, so that he could feel his jacket drawn out straight behind him as if the wind were in a twisting, whirling mood bent only upon cutting capers of an evil sort, and again he was in darkness, but with it the noise ceased. His utmost endeavors had proved futile and he had been unable to keep the matches burning. His first inclination was to cry out, as now a feeling of helplessness came over him, but he knew that it would be useless to expect any one could hear him. He then

placed one hand down to feel about him as to the security of his position, when to his delight he felt the candle.

“Ha!” thought Joe, “this time I’ll know enough not to drop it,” when to his consternation he heard a rustling movement in the dead grass and dirt behind him, and then something came sliding down, lodging at his back. Joe’s grasp was no very mild squeeze, for a certain amount of frenzy was mingled with a grim determination to become master of the situation, as he sank his fingers deep into the soft coat of his assailant in the rear.

CHAPTER XIX.

WHEN a situation gets beyond the powers of a narrator it is customary to say that it is easier imagined than described, and had not the doctor afterward told the writer just how he felt when the rope was drawn away from his unwilling hands, the author would here resort to the same expedient in speaking of the unhappy man's feelings at that time. For a few minutes he was without the power of moving. His brain was in a whirl and refused to suggest the slightest loophole out of this awful predicament. There he stood gazing down into the depths of that black, yawning hole. No sound came up, not even a groan to tell him that Joe was yet alive! When the doctor had recovered sufficiently to speak, he shouted down the hole:

"Hello! Joe!" No answer came back. "Oh! Joe, are you hurt?" and although the doctor listened intently he heard nothing.

Great heavens! what had become of Joe? How far had he fallen before he could have reached the bottom of this awful hole? Now in an agony of suspense the doctor walked about its treacherous edge, calling incessantly to Joe but receiving no answer. He felt himself in a most miserable plight. The mules gone, and Joe lying at an unknown depth in the bowels of the earth and most likely dead. There was the doctor without a rope or even a stick. Perfectly helpless! There was no use in standing there ; he must hurry back to camp for help. Determining that this was the only thing to be done, he turned and started back to camp. The doctor had not gone more than a hundred yards from the hole when up from the long grass sprang three Indians who rushed upon him. They were savage fellows with but little on them save

paint and feathers and more like the old aborigines than any of the tribes that the doctor had seen. They were simply armed with bows and arrows, and war clubs. It afterward proved that they were Stoney's and belonged on the head waters of the Saskatchewan river. The Stoney's were a tribe that had always been considered quite peaceable, but these were a few of a war party skirmishing a long way from their own hunting grounds.

The poor old doctor, terrified with the horror of an awful death impending, turned and ran, but age and his own corpulency were against him and he was handicapped in this race for life. Short, indeed, was the course, for with yells of an awful kind and with bounds that a race horse would have had trouble to excell the three savages were upon him swinging their clubs in the air as they ran! One demon, a little in advance of the others, struck the fated naturalist a glancing blow on the side of the head and

felled him to the earth, unconscious now of all that was to befall him!

Gutterals and grunts, grins and gesticulations from the three savages told of their delight at their success, and they fairly danced up and down as they circled about their victim. The one that had dealt the fateful blow seemed to express his proprietorship in the victim, and, drawing his scalping knife reached over the prostrate form with a whirl of the knife, and with the other hand he gave most powerful jerks at the doctor's heavy brown hair. There was more power expended than was needed, and the unnecessary force sent the savage sprawling over on his back with the wig of the doctor in his hand! More yells from the savages, and then, as they more carefully examined the bald head now exposed to their view for the first time they expressed their veneration for this great chief that must have done much fighting to have been scalped and have lived through it. There was a deep coulee not far from

the hole and the Indians had left their kiyuses in this, having been riding along at the bottom of it the better to keep themselves out of sight and they had come quite unexpectedly upon the doctor, just as he had dropped the rope. They had been silent witnesses to his after trouble, but not having arrived upon the scene previously to that, they were unaware that Joe was at the bottom of the hole.

One of the Indians went back after their kiyuses, while one went to examine the spot where the doctor had been standing when first seen, leaving the third standing over his prostrate form examining the material composing the wig. The Indian that found the hole was as surprised as the boys had been when they first came to it. After much talking and gesticulating they threw the unconscious doctor over one of the kiyuses and carried him to the edge of the hole, then dumped him as unceremoniously on the ground as if he had been a sack of salt. Much talking followed this, and it

was finally decided to leave the doctor there securely bound while they rode back to their camp for an extra kiyus, as none of the three would consent to walk.

One of the savages tossed a stone down the hole. It sounded as if it struck bottom. Ha! A bright idea struck him. He uncoiled a long hair lariat from his saddle, and, as the other Indians had securely tied the doctor's hands behind his back, he now passed one end of the lariat about his body under his arms and explained to his fellows, that to prevent anyone else finding their victim they had best lower him down out of sight. This was agreed to, as no chance must be run of being balked of the pleasure they anticipated in putting so great a chief to the torture. One of them took an iron picket pin from his kiyus and with his war club drove it securely into the ground a foot or two from the hole. Then they rolled the inanimate form of the doctor over the edge and let the lariat slide down! It was well that it was a long lariat for their

unconscious burden did not stop until it had lodged against Joe's back. The Indians securely tied the lariat to the iron pin, and then seated themselves a few rods from the hole to enjoy a lunch of raw buffalo hump that one of them had taken from the back of his saddle.

* * * * *

We must now go back to Joe, left down at the bottom of this unlucky shaft clutching at the doctor's soft woolen shirt that at first he had taken for another horrible enemy, of some unknown nature.

Joe's nerves had been severely strained already and he felt a great sense of relief that this unknown object was remaining quiet under his hands. He thought of bears and mountain lions, but it felt like nothing of this sort, and his mind could conjecture no images that might be as this unknown intruder felt, but he believed that now he had the mischievous author of all the pranks that had been played upon him. Joe was quickly on his knees bending over

the object beneath him. Carefully striking a match and sheltering it with his hands he managed to light the candle; and to his amazement he beheld Dr. Goon lying at his feet bound and insensible! Then again his candle was blown out but this time he had seen the shadowy wings of innumerable bats flitting about his head! The mystery was solved, it had been they that had put out his light!

A faint groan from the doctor told Joe that he was alive, and without stopping to light his candle again fearing it would only be blown out he commenced feeling all over him with his hands. It was the doctor and securely bound with thongs! These Joe cut with his hunting knife, that he had in his belt, together with a large army revolver that in his utter impotence he had previously not so much as thought of, and quite fortunately so for the doctor, for had Joe had them in his hands he would have used them. Joe then rubbed the doctor's hands and chafed his wrists. A more pro-

nounced groan rewarded him and then the doctor feebly asked:

“Where am I?”

“You’re right here with me, sir. How do you feel? Are you hurt?” asked Joe, eagerly.

“But where am I? It’s so dark! Is that you, Joe? Oh! my head!”

“Is your head hurt? You are down in the hole with me. Who tied you? How did it happen?” asked Joe, breathlessly.

“Yes, my head feels sore. The Indians chased me. Oh! How I ran and then I remember no more. Yes, it comes to me now, how I let the rope slip! Were you hurt, Joe?”

“No, no, never mind about me; I’m all right.”

“But how did you get me down here with you, Joe? Did you run the Indians off?”

“No, sir, they must have thought that they had killed you and lowered you down here. There was a hair rope tied about you.”

"Is that so? But why don't you light your candle, Joe? Oh! How my head aches! There is an awful bruise on the side of my head and it's all wet. Strike a light, Joe. This darkness is awful."

"I've done so half a dozen times, sir, but can't keep it alight; the place is full of bats and they blow it out. This hair rope that was tied about you seems to have been fastened to something above, I'm pulling all my weight on it."

"Do n't do it, Joe! Let it alone! Strike a light."

"All right, sir," replied Joe, and he struck a match and lighted the candle which he protected with both hands. Its fitful glare showed the doctor lying at his feet, a most pitiable object, with his clothes a mass of dirt and the blood covering the side of his face. He lay on a heap of dried grass and dirt, while the innumerable bats flitted savagely about their heads.

"If you can hold this candle in your hands away from the bats I'll see if I can't

knock over a few of them with the butt of this old revolver," said Joe.

"It will do no good. Joe, we're in a very bad plight."

"Oh, nonsense! If you're not hurt we're all right. We can whip a regiment of them if they should try to come down here after us, and as soon as we fail to appear at camp at the usual time they will come out and look us up. Don't borrow trouble, I can lay out a few of these bats and then they will let me alone. I owe them one for the fright they gave me."

"Did they frighten you, Joe?"

"I tell you truly, doctor, that I believe I never knew what it was to be frightened before in my life. I've always found that the excitement incident to all danger keeps one's courage up. But down here alone with those awful things blowing about my face and touching me with their clammy wings, I actually could feel my knees tremble."

"It was too bad, but I'm keeping you company now."

"Yes, and I wish you were safely back in camp."

"But where do you wish you were?"

"Oh, I'd not mind being there with you, but if help doesn't come before night it's sure to come in the morning."

"I hope so; I wonder what time it is now; it must be night," continued the doctor, as he felt for his watch.

"Oh, no! It's not half an hour since I slid down the rope."

"Possible! But, Joe, my watch is gone! Those scoundrels must have stolen it!" exclaimed the doctor, not finding his valuable repeater.

"That's too bad! but you may get it back. Hold the light steady!"

Whack! went Joe's clubbed revolver against a big bat that fell to the ground with a dull thud. Joe looked about him as he was watching for a chance at another, and saw that they were in a regular cave

some twenty feet high and about twice as wide. It was nearly spherical in shape and at the far side appeared another hole. Again a bat came close to him and then another dull thud. This one fell to the ground only maimed, and set up the most terrible screeching imaginable. The noise started every other bat in the place to flying and now Joe had all he could do, laying about him in gran' style with his revolver for a club. The air was filled with them, and in the darkness so feebly illuminated by the shaded candle they looked as large as hawks. Their screeching now was terrible. They flew about in clouds, and Joe stood there for full ten minutes knocking them to the floor of the cave; then suddenly the bats flew to the roof and crawled into innumerable small holes up there.

"They did not get the candle out that time, but my, what a lot I've killed! The floor is covered with them!" cried Joe, taking a long breath after his violent

exertions. "How does your head feel now, sir?"

"Much better, I'm not much hurt, and if I were only out of this I'd be all right," replied the doctor, touching the bruise on his head tenderly.

"All in good time, sir, and while we are waiting I'm going to explore this place a bit. There is a large hole over there leading somewhere."

"Well, do be careful. We've got into trouble enough for one day."

"I shall take no more chances, and if the traveling's not good I'll come back. You may keep this light and I'll fire another."

"Now, mind what I say, and take care."

"All right, sir," responded Joe, as he went across the cave and looked beyond him, holding his candle above his head as he leaned against the side of the aperture. He saw before him the interior of another chamber much like the one they were in but only half as large. Into this he walked without hindrance. It was empty and

Joe was about to return when he noticed a hole at the far side of this one, so on he went. This led to a third chamber, still smaller, which, like the other, was empty. At the far side of this was a similar hole leading to the fourth chamber, yet smaller. In fact, Joe had to almost crawl to get in. This cave was quite a small one and evidently the last of the chain of caverns. Joe looked about him and saw on one side the bleached and whitened bones of a skeleton. It was that of a man of immense size and gave Joe a thrill of horror as he stood looking at the ghastly relic. On the wall above this, deeply cut in the chalky earth, were the initials "W. A. C." and beneath the date 1850.

"The same that were cut on that tree; how very odd! Those circles must have referred to this chain of caves. The poor fellow must have been wounded and died here. He must have had a rope to help him out. Perhaps some Indians found it and pulled it up leaving him to starve down in here like a

rat in a hole! Here is the iron of a pick and shovel; the wooden part must have rotted and decayed. Why, his very bones are crumbling!" exclaimed Joe, to himself, as he touched the skeleton with his foot.

"Some poor miner or prospector has lost his life here for the hopes of gold never found, and here's his camp kettle," continued Joe again, hitting this article a kick, but instead of tumbling over as an empty pot should it did not move and Joe felt his toes had received the worst of the blow.

"What's in the thing, anyway?" questioned Joe of himself, as he stooped down and moved the dust covered top with one hand holding his candle carefully with the other.

"Ha! What's this? It's gold!" he exclaimed, starting up in amazement.

Yes, it was gold; gold in its most alluring form; gold just as it had been taken from the hands of nature; gold, bright, alluring, enchanting gold; gold in beautiful yellow

dust and nuggets! and the pot was full to the brim!

Joe thrust his hands into it and allowed the bright particles to sift through his fingers, to persuade himself that he was not dreaming.

Then he took the pot by the handle and ascertained its weight to be close to seventy-five pounds, as he carried it on back as fast as the load would allow him, to where he had left the doctor. Dr. Goon was even more excited than Joe had been, for he more thoroughly understood the value of the find.

"You will be a rich man, Joe, when you get all this back to civilization; it's all yours, you know, as there is no way of telling who that poor unfortunate may have been, nor who his heirs may be."

"If that be the case of course we shall have to keep it."

"But it's all yours: you found it."

"Well, indeed, we've found it together, and we share alike or I carry it back," cried Joe, indignantly.

"All right, Joe, but we're not out of here yet."

"I know that, but it can't be more than an hour, now, that we've been down here, and you're sure there were only three Indians?"

"Yes, only three; was not that enough?"

"Three too many; but I don't think they will stay about the hole long; I think I'll climb up the rope and see if they are gone," replied Joe.

"What do you say? You're crazy."

"But I'm not, I can crawl up there and reconnoiter. There can be no danger. If they were close to the edge of the hole I could slide down the rope like a flash. You see, the last half of this shaft slopes at an angle of about forty-five degrees, and is so full of the dead grass blown down that if one were to fall, he'd hardly get hurt."

"Nonsense! don't talk of such a thing."

"I want to try it, there'll be no harm. If I hear them before I get to the top I'll slide down again, so here goes," persisted Joe, as

he grasped the rope and started up despite the protestations of the doctor.

The first half of the way was easy enough with his feet on the footwall of the incline, and pulling hand over hand on the rope he was soon up to where he could see the light of day shining down from above. The rest of Joe's journey was a more difficult feat, but little by little he approached the top. Every few feet he would stop and listen intently. On he went, not hearing anything to alarm him. His feet were employed in climbing as well as his hands. Reaching the top he again listened for several moments before peering over the edge of the hole. All was quiet and Joe cautiously brought his head above the ground.

CHAPTER XX.

As he first glanced about him he saw nothing. The country was free from all intruders, Joe thought, and so, reaching out his hand, he grasped the picket pin that was firmly driven into the ground and raised himself carefully out. This brought his head above the grass, although he still crouched as low as he possibly could. This brought into view the welcome sight of Tom coming galloping toward him, leading the two runaway mules. Filled with joy Joe was about to spring to his feet when to his consternation he discovered lying in the grass about a hundred yards from him the naked forms of the three savages! And the unconscious Tom was galloping directly toward them!

Joe was quick to think and quicker still to act. He drew out the long army revolver

from the belt strapped about his waist and carefully examined it as he crawled a few yards toward the Indians. On came Tom, shouting and yelling as loudly as he could, and the Indians carefully raised themselves a trifle. Joe approached the murderous villains with his revolver at full cock, resting the long barrel in his left hand to make his aim even more certain.

At any other time it would have seemed a most horrible thing to Joe to shoot a human being down from the rear without so much as giving him a chance for his life, but now, with three of them to contend against, and they lying in wait to slay his best friend, not the slightest compunction troubled him; he was only anxious lest he might miss his mark. On came Tom, hunting for the hole in the ground, and although there was nothing to mark the spot at any distance yet his bump of location was good and he was making a most remarkable guess. The Indians were each now on one knee holding his long bow tightly drawn,

with a deadly arrow at the string. A few steps nearer to them and Joe, taking careful aim at the back of the Indian in the center of the group, pulled the trigger.

Bang! rang forth the heavy revolver, and Joe, jumping to one side to clear himself of the heavy cloud of smoke that rested about him in the still air, saw the savage spring into the air, both arms extended and fall over backward. The other two turned upon their unknown assailant in the rear and instantly let fly the arrows that had been intended for Tom. It was done at the same instant that Joe's second shot was made which took effect, disabling the right arm of one of them, crushing the bone, while their arrows flew wide of the mark. Joe dropped low in the grass to avoid the next arrow, not knowing that but one of his assailants was left able to continue the fight.

Tom had stopped short at this unlooked for encounter and instantly jumped from his mule and unslung his carbine from the

saddle. Tying the bridle reins of the three mules together to prevent their running away, he took a shot at the two savages.

Finding themselves between two fires was too much for the equanimity of the Indians, only armed with bows and arrows, and turning, they left the field in possession of the boys, running like deer to the coulee, where they had left their ponies. Tom ran to where Joe was standing.

"You're not hurt, I hope, are you? But where's the doctor?" he cried.

"No, I'm all right and so's the doctor," answered Joe.

"Then let's follow those fellows on our mules and give them another volley; we can catch them; what do you say?"

"No, they've got their ponies hidden over there, and the chances are that they are getting away too fast for us to catch them; but how did you happen to come with our mules?"

"But where's Dr. Goon? Tell me that first."

"Oh, he's down the hole; those Indians nearly killed him, but he's all right now. I've laid out one of them."

"How lucky I came! I was in the hills over there with Hugill after specimens, and your mules came up to where ours were picketed and so I knew they must have left you in the lurch, and catching them I lost no time in hunting after you. I thought you would be at the hole for some time and be glad of a ride back."

"Yes, we will be, for we've got quite a load to take back. The first thing to do is to get the doctor up out of this hole; he can never climb up."

"How did he get down?"

"Those Indians nearly killed him when I was down at the bottom; you see, the doctor dropped the rope on which I went down, and they came upon him all alone and nearly killed him," and here he briefly related their troubles.

Joe again slid down the rope and found the doctor nearly in despair. All kinds of

disaster had flitted through his mind, and the old fellow almost cried for joy at seeing the lad again before him, sound and well. Now to get the doctor out. The first part of the journey he managed to perform without assistance. Here Joe tied the rope about him, and then climbing up again, he and Tom by the most violent exertions arranged to draw him to the surface.

"Thank Heaven! I am again in the light of day," gasped the doctor, for the rope had cut into him to such an extent that he had almost lost his breath. Joe had one more trip to make and this time they hauled up the pot of gold.

"I never forget the Institute," remarked Joe, slyly pulling a couple of the bats from his pocket.

"Good for you, Joe, but I shall enjoy a wash," said the doctor, as he tried to brush some of the dirt from his clothes.

"Never mind the dirt; you are out of it, most luckily, with only that bruise on your head."

"We must hurry and get away from here. Those fellows will lose no time in coming back with more to avenge this fellow's death; but we will have our cavalry after them; we will teach them a lesson," growled the doctor, savagely.

It was with much trouble that their treasure was packed on one of the mules, but at length they all found themselves safely back at camp, but the secret of their most important find was religiously kept by the three, from all the others.

The next day the cavalry searched the prairies but could not find anything of hostile Indians. All were greatly indignant that the venerable doctor should have been treated in such a manner. Then came orders to move camp. The new station, that they now established, was about half way between the Sweet Grass Hills and the Rocky mountains, and on the broad rolling prairie again. The astronomical party and the others went on west to the main range, but the naturalist's party and commissary

department remained here, with a portion of the escort. The doctor and Joe insisted upon dividing their treasure equally with Tom, as he had been with Joe when he discovered the bats' hole.

Their labors here were much the same as they had been and thus the balance of the summer and early fall slipped by them, their duties being more like a continued round of pleasure than anything else, and when with the shortening days came the news that the expedition was getting ready to return,—each party having about finished its labors,—both Tom and Joe felt a pang of regret at having to leave the broad prairies, and return to civilization.

A three days' journey due south brought them to a government post called Fort Shaw; here their large escort of cavalry and infantry had orders to report for duty, leaving the civilians to proceed to Fort Benton without them, as they were now in a country settled sparsely by the whites. Fort Benton, as the place was yet called,

was not a military post, although soldiers had formerly been stationed there, and it yet retained its old appellation. It was a trading post, at the extreme head of navigation of the Missouri river, and then boasting of five hundred inhabitants.

At this point, a general disorganization of the expedition took place, for as many decided to remain in the country as chose to return. Such a number of men scattered about Fort Benton could but enliven it for the time. Those who had elected to cast their fortunes in that distant land were buying ponies to carry them to the capital, Helena, the famed city of the Northwest, and our ever venturesome Joe was among the latter.

“You’ve actually made up your mind to leave us, have you, Joe?” asked Tom, as the two boys strolled along the main street of the town, which ran along the river bank and had but a row of buildings on the one side of it, facing the river.

“Yes, I’m going to Helena to try my fortunes there. There is no opening for a fellow in St. Paul, and I have got to carve my own way in this world, and I think I’ll find a place for myself at something,” answered Joe.

They were slowly walking along on the rough board sidewalks, casually observing the crude style of the buildings, the most of which were made of hewed logs, and nearly every other one being occupied by a vendor of spirituous liquors. They were now passing a barber’s shop, and were almost knocked over by a round, fat-faced barber, who with a towel in one hand and a razor in the other, dashed out of the door, making no cessation in his rapid flight until he reached the middle of the street. The boys’ attention was next given to the pursuer, who had followed him closely through the door, but stopped on the sidewalk. He was an exceedingly tall, long-legged individual, with a short stumpy beard on his chin, his cheeks showing that they had been

just shaved. They did not recognize him until he spoke, and his wrath prevented him from doing this for several seconds.

It was Hugill!

But where were his beautiful long side whiskers—those rivals of Lord Dundreary's? A realizing sense of the metamorphosis dawning upon the boys they broke out into smiles, then into uncontrollable fits of laughter, and Hugill sputtered, fumed, and raved, mingling imprecations on the Dutch barber, with his lamentations for his lost treasures.

"Oh! The blooming idiot! He has made a bloody Yankee of me, ye know," howled Hugill, as he felt of his chin.

"Oho! Why, how—Ha! Ha! Ha!" roared Tom, who had lost all powers of speech, laughing at the ridiculous plight of Mr. Hugill.

"Why, ye know, if I didn't want to avoid a row, I'd punch his mulish head, ye know! I was up nearly all last night, and I fell into a doze, ye know, and instead of

scraping me chin as I told him, Oh! confound the bloody fool!"

"Oh! Lordy! Lordy! What—Ha! Ha! Ha!" Here Joe's laughter got the better of him, and his sentence was unfinished.

"Yes, this is the trick he's played me, tricked me out like a nasal twanging Yankee, ye know!" stormed Hugill, shaking his fist at the trembling barber in the middle of the road ejaculating many apologies.

"Oh! Lord, what would your—Ha! Ha! Ha!" roared Joe, as Hugill clutched at the hirsute appendage on his chin as if in mad endeavor to have it torn off.

"I was in great luck that I stopped him in time to save my moustache, ye know."

"Oh! dear! I shall die! But what would your—your aunt, say now? Ha! Ha! Ha!" gasped Joe.

"Yes, the Lady Frances Hugill! Ha! Ha!"

"Yes, I think so. Come back here, you grinning ape, and take this thing off my chin! You're in luck I don't punch your mulish head, ye know!" thundered Hugill,

and the poor barber, striking up a truce with the irate Hugill, proceeded to finish his contract, and the boys went on down the street.

"That barber has got the best joke of the season on Hugill; it will take him a long time to recover those beauties. That barber has been a Delilah to him."

"He'll not be so conceited now; I hear he is going to Helena, too."

"Company for you, Joe."

"No, I thank you, I shall go alone. I want to cut adrift from them all, for, as you can see, they are already trying to spend their money as fast as they can, and, as I am going to send mine home, I don't care to keep any of them company, unless I find some one of them as soberly disposed as myself."

"That's right, Joe, but I do wish you were going down the river with us in the boats. It seems as if we ought not to part until we got back to the place we started from."

"I am only doing what I think is the best thing for me to do for myself."

"Of course, of course, and I hope it will turn out to be so."

"I trust it will," replied Joe, earnestly.

Some half dozen large boats had been built for them, and were now lying on the river bank, and in them, all those who chose to return found transportation down to Bismarck where they were to take the cars for St. Paul. Hugill had found all of his trunks stored in the only warehouse in the place, and a freight and storage bill of such a length as to appall him. He also found himself in a land of limited transportation facilities. Just what to do he did not know until he was struck with the brilliant expedient of auctioning them off. This he did, and most successfully, being his own auctioneer. He gave the most graphic account imaginable of every garment, the very street in London in which it had been purchased, and just the number of pounds, shillings and pence that it had cost him.

This lucid description convinced them all that they were buying imported goods, and they were willing to pay well for such. Hugill afterward confessed unblushingly to Joe that this was all a fabrication on his part as he had purchased everything in St. Paul, "but it was such fun to get a jolly price from the grasping Yankees, ye know."

It was a question which of the two lads felt the worse at parting, and although it is always accredited to the one that goes away as being happier than he who stays behind, yet in this instance it is safe to say the old adage was reversed. Joe, with the world before him, had the excitement of expectant incidents to sustain him, while Tom could only see the possibilities of misfortunes for his comrade. The flat-bottomed boats floated down the rapid current, and as long as they were in sight Tom kept his handkerchief waving to signal kind wishes and farewells to the one that stood on the bank, and it was not until the last bend of the

river served to hide them all from view forever, that Joe's fortitude gave way and the tears rolled down his cheeks.

This all happened many years ago, and Joe has never had cause to regret the tears shed there, on the banks of the upper Missouri for his departing friend. Tom soon after this was admitted to West Point, where he afterward was graduated with honors, and is now a first lieutenant, serving his country on the frontiers of Texas, a young officer respected by his superiors and idolized by his men. Joe Conklin landed his share of the gold dust safely in Helena where he found that it was worth much more than he had dreamed. His disposition of this sudden wealth did credit to the lad. He sent a greater part of it back to his father to pay off a mortgage that he knew had long been standing on their homestead, which had often been accredited by Joe as the cause of his father's irritable disposition. Joe's business transactions at the

bank resulted in securing him a position in it, and should any of the readers of this story have occasion to transact business at the Fourth National Bank at Helena, they will find in the genial and business-like cashier the original of my sketch.

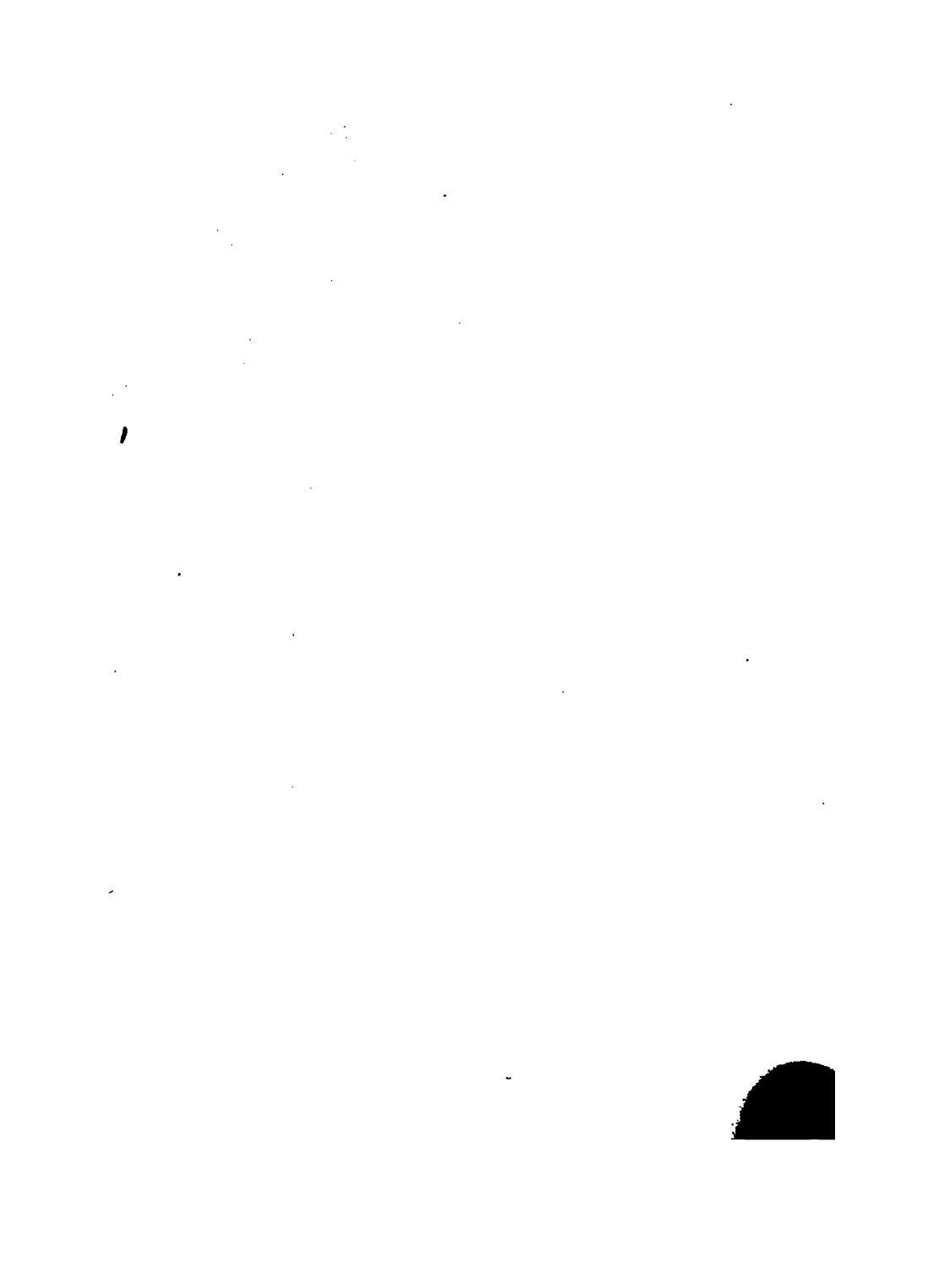
THE END.











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